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CHENTRY HOUSE



This is the original

CHANTRY HOUSE

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF 'THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE,' 'UNKNOWN TO HISTORY,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London

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1886

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CHAPTER I.

A NURSERY PROSE.

‘ And if it be the heart of man
Which our existence measures,
Far longer is our childhood’s span
Than that of manly pleasures.

‘ For long each month and year is then,
Their thoughts and days extending,
But months and years pass swift with men
To time’s last goal descending.’

ISAAC WILLIAMS.

THE united force of the younger generation has been brought upon me to record, with the aid of diaries and letters, the circumstances connected with Chantry House and my two dear elder brothers. Once this could not have been done without more pain than I could brook, but the lapse of time heals wounds, brings compensations, and, when the heart has ceased from aching and yearning, makes the memory of what once filled it a treasure to be brought forward with joy and thankfulness. Nor would it be well that some of those

mentioned in the coming narrative should be wholly forgotten, and their place know them no more.

To explain all, I must go back to a time long before the morning when my father astonished us all by exclaiming, 'Poor old James Winslow! So Chantry House is come to us after all!' Previous to that event I do not think we were aware of the existence of that place, far less of its being a possible inheritance, for my parents would never have permitted themselves or their family to be unsettled by the notion of doubtful contingencies.

My father, John Edward Winslow, was a barrister, and held an appointment in the Admiralty Office, which employed him for many hours of the day at Somerset House. My mother, whose maiden name was Mary Griffith, belonged to a naval family. Her father had been lost in a West Indian hurricane at sea, and her uncle, Admiral Sir John Griffith, was the hero of the family, having been at Trafalgar and distinguished himself in cutting out expeditions. My eldest brother bore his name. The second was named after the Duke of Clarence, with whom my mother had once danced at a ball on board ship at Portsmouth, and who had been rather fond of my uncle. Indeed, I believe my father's appointment had been obtained through his interest, just about the time of Clarence's birth.

We three boys had come so fast upon each

other's heels in the Novembers of 1809, 10, and 11, that any two of us used to look like twins. There is still extant a feeble water-coloured drawing of the trio, in nankeen frocks, and long white trowsers, with bare necks and arms, the latter twined together, and with the free hands, Griffith holding a bat, Clarence a trap, and I a ball. I remember the emulation we felt at Griffith's privilege of eldest in holding the bat.

The sitting for that picture is the only thing I clearly remember during those earlier days. I have no recollection of the disaster, which, at four years old, altered my life. The catastrophe, as others have described it, was that we three boys were riding cock-horse on the balusters of the second floor of our house in Montagu Place, Russell Square, when we indulged in a general *mêlée*, which resulted in all tumbling over into the vestibule below. The others, to whom I served as cushion, were not damaged beyond the power of yelling, and were quite restored in half-an-hour, but I was undermost, and the consequence has been a curved spine, dwarfed stature, an elevated shoulder, and a shortened, nearly useless leg.

What I do remember, is my mother reading to me Miss Edgeworth's *Frank and the little dog Trusty*, as I lay in my crib in her bedroom. I made one of my nieces hunt up the book for me

the other day, and the story brought back at once the little crib, or the watered blue moreen canopy of the big four-poster to which I was sometimes lifted for a change; even the scrawly pattern of the paper, which my weary eyes made into purple elves perpetually pursuing crimson ones, the foremost of whom always turned upside down; and the knobs in the Marseilles counterpane with which my fingers used to toy. I have heard my mother tell that whenever I was most languid and suffering I used to whine out, 'O do read *Frank and the little dog Trusty*,' and never permitted a single word to be varied, in the curious childish love of reiteration with its soothing power.

I am afraid that any true picture of our parents, especially of my mother, will not do them justice in the eyes of the young people of the present day, who are accustomed to a far more indulgent government, and yet seem to me to know little of the loyal veneration and submission with which we have, through life, regarded our father and mother. It would have been reckoned disrespectful to address them by these names; they were through life to us, in private, papa and mamma, and we never presumed to take a liberty with them. I doubt whether the petting, patronising equality of terms on which children now live with their parents be equally wholesome. There was then, however, strong

love and self-sacrificing devotion; but not manifested in softness or cultivation of sympathy. Nothing was more dreaded than spoiling, which was viewed as idle and unjustifiable self-gratification at the expense of the objects thereof. There were an unlucky little pair in Russell Square who were said to be 'spoilt children,' and who used to be mentioned in our nursery with bated breath as a kind of monsters or criminals. I believe our mother laboured under a perpetual fear of spoiling Griff as the eldest, Clarence as the beauty, me as the invalid, Emily (two years younger) as the only girl, and Martyn as the after-thought, six years below our sister. She was always performing little acts of conscientiousness, little as we guessed it.

Thus though her unremitting care saved my life, and was such that she finally brought on herself a severe and dangerous illness, she kept me in order all the time, never wailed over me nor weakly pitied me, never permitted resistance to medicine nor rebellion against treatment, enforced little courtesies, insisted on every required exertion, and hardly ever relaxed the rule of Spartan fortitude in herself as in me. It is to this resolution on her part, carried out consistently at whatever present cost to us both, that I owe such powers of locomotion as I possess, and the

habits of exertion that have been even more valuable to me.

When at last, after many weeks, nay months, of this watchfulness, she broke down, so that her life was for a time in danger, the lack of her bracing and tender care made my life very trying, after I found myself transported to the nursery, scarcely understanding why, accused of having by my naughtiness made my poor mamma so ill, and discovering for the first time that I was a miserable, naughty little fretful being, and with nobody but Clarence and the housemaid to take pity on me.

Nurse Gooch was a masterful, trustworthy woman, and was laid under injunctions not to indulge Master Edward. She certainly did not err in that respect, though she attended faithfully to my material welfare; but woe to me if I gave way to a little moaning; and what I felt still harder, she never said 'good boy' if I contrived to abstain.

I hear of carpets, curtains, and pictures in the existing nurseries. They must be palaces compared with our great bare attic, where nothing was allowed that could gather dust. One bit of drugget by the fireside, where stood a round table at which the maids talked and darned stockings, was all that hid the bare boards; the walls were as plain as those of a workhouse, and when the London sun did shine, it glared into my eyes through the great

unshaded windows. There was a deal table for the meals (and very plain meals they were), and two or three big presses painted white for our clothes, and one cupboard for our toys. I must say that Gooch was strictly just, and never permitted little Emily, nor Griff—though he was very decidedly the favourite,—to bear off my beloved woolly dog to be stabled in the houses of wooden bricks which the two were continually constructing for their menagerie of maimed animals.

Griff was deservedly the favourite with every one who was not, like our parents, conscientiously bent on impartiality. He was so bright and winning, he had such curly tight-rolled hair with a tinge of auburn, such merry bold blue eyes, such glowing dimpled cheeks, such a joyous smile all over his face, and such a ringing laugh; he was so strong, brave, and sturdy, that he was a boy to be proud of, and a perfect king in his own way, making every one do as he pleased. All the maids, and Peter the footman, were his slaves, every one except nurse and mamma, and it was only by a strong effort of principle that they resisted him; while he dragged Clarence about as his devoted though not always happy follower.

Alas! for Clarence! Courage was not in him. The fearless infant boy chiefly dwells in conventional fiction, and valour seldom comes before strength.

Moreover, I have come to the opinion that though no one thought of it at the time, his nerves must have had a terrible and lasting shock at the accident and at the sight of my crushed and deathly condition, which occupied every one too much for them to think of soothing or shielding him. At any rate, fear was the misery of his life. Darkness was his horror. He would scream till he brought in some one, though he knew it would be only to scold or slap him. The housemaid's closet on the stairs was to him an abode of wolves. Mrs. Gatty's tale of *The Tiger in the Coal-box* is a transcript of his feelings, except that no one took the trouble to reassure him; something undefined and horrible was thought to wag in the case of the eight-day clock; and he could not bear to open the play cupboard lest 'something' should jump out on him. The first time he was taken to the Zoological Gardens, the monkeys so terrified him that a bystander insisted on Gooch's carrying him away lest he should go into fits, though Griffith was shouting with ecstasy, and could hardly forgive the curtailment of his enjoyment.

Clarence used to aver that he really did see 'things' in the dark, but as he only shuddered and sobbed instead of describing them, he was punished for 'telling fibs,' though the housemaid used to speak under her breath of his being a 'Sunday child.' And after long penance, tied to his stool

in the corner, he would creep up to me and whisper, 'But, Eddy, I really did!'

However, it was only too well established in the nursery that Clarence's veracity was on a par with his courage. When taxed with any misdemeanour, he used to look round scared and bewildered, and utter a flat demur. One scene in particular comes before me. There were strict laws against going into shops or buying dainties without express permission from mamma or nurse; but one day when Clarence had by some chance been sent out alone with the good-natured housemaid, his fingers were found sticky.

'Now, Master Clarence, you've been a naughty boy, eating of sweets,' exclaimed stern Justice in a mob cap and frills.

'No—no——' faltered the victim; but, alas! Mrs. Gooch had only to thrust her hand into the little pocket of his monkey suit to convict him on the spot.

The maid was dismissed with a month's wages, and poor Clarence underwent a strange punishment from my mother, who was getting about again by that time, namely, a drop of hot sealing-wax on his tongue, to teach him practically the doom of the false tongue. It might have done him good if there had been sufficient encouragement to him to make him try to win a new character, but it only added

a fresh terror to his mind ; and nurse grew fond of manifesting her incredulity of his assertions by always referring to Griff or to me, or even to little Emily. What was worse, she used to point him out to her congeners in the Square or the Park as 'such a false child.'

He was a very pretty little fellow, with a delicately rosy face, wistful blue eyes, and soft, light, wavy hair, and perhaps Gooch was jealous of his attracting more notice than Griffith, and thought he posed for admiration, for she used to tell people that no one could guess what a child he was for slyness ; so that he could not bear going out with her, and sometimes bemoaned himself to me.

There must be a good deal of sneaking in the undeveloped nature, for in those days I was ashamed of my preference for Clarence, the naughty one. But there was no helping it, he was so much more gentle than Griff, and would always give up any sport that incommoded me, instead of calling me a stupid little ape, and becoming more boisterous after the fashion of Griff. Moreover, he fetched and carried for me unweariedly, and would play at spillekins, help to put up puzzles, and enact little dramas with our wooden animals, such as Griff scorned as only fit for babies. Even nurse allowed Clarence's merits towards me and little Emily, but always with the sigh : 'If he was but as good

in other respects, but them quiet ones is always sly.'

Good Nurse Gooch! We all owe much to her staunch fidelity, strong discipline, and unselfish devotion, but nature had not fitted her to deal with a timid, sensitive child, of highly nervous temperament. Indeed, persons of far more insight might have been perplexed by the fact that Clarence was exemplary at church and prayers, family and private,—when ever Griff would let him, that is to say,—and would add private petitions of his own, sometimes of a startling nature. He never scandalised the nursery, like Griff, by unseemly pranks on Sundays, nor by innovations in the habits of Noah's ark, but was as much shocked as nurse when the lion was made to devour the elephant, or the lion and wolf fought in an embrace fatal to their legs. Bible stories and Watt's hymns were more to Clarence than even to me, and he used to ask questions for which Gooch's theology was quite insufficient, and which brought the invariable answers, 'Now, Master Clarry, I never did! Little boys should not ask such questions!' 'What's the use of your pretending, sir! It's all falseness, that's what it is! I hates hyper-criting!' 'Don't worrit, Master Clarence; you are a very naughty boy to say such things. I shall put you in the corner!'

Even nurse was scared one night when Clarence

had a frightful screaming fit, declaring that he saw ‘*her*—her—all white,’ and even while being slapped reiterated, ‘*her*, Lucy !’

Lucy was a kind elder girl in the Square gardens, a protector of little timid ones. She was known to be at that time very ill with measles, and in fact died that very night. Both my brothers sickened the next day, and Emily and I soon followed their example, but no one had it badly except Clarence, who had high fever, and very much delirium each night, talking to people whom he thought he saw, so as to make nurse regret her severity on the vision of Lucy.

CHAPTER II.

SCHOOLROOM DAYS.

‘ In the loom of life-cloth pleasure,
Ere our childish days be told,
With the warp and woof enwoven,
Glitters like a thread of gold.’—JEAN INGELow.

LOOKING back, I think my mother was the leading spirit in our household, though she never for a moment suspected it. Indeed, the chess queen must be the most active on the home board, and one of the objects of her life was to give her husband a restful evening when he came home to the six o'clock dinner. She also had to make both ends meet on an income which would seem starvation at the present day ; but she was strong, spirited, and managing, and equal to all her tasks till the long attendance upon me, and the consequent illness, forced her to spare herself—a little—a very little.

Previously she had been our only teacher, except that my father read a chapter of the Bible with us every morning before breakfast, and heard

the Catechism on a Sunday. For we could all read long before young gentlefolks nowadays can say their letters. It was well for me, since books with a small quantity of type, and a good deal of frightful illustration, beguiled many of my weary moments. You may see my special favourites, bound up, on the shelf in my bedroom. Crabbe's *Tales*, *Frank*, *the Parent's Assistant*, and later, Croker's *Tales from English History*, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, *Tales of a Grandfather*, and the *Rival Crusoes* stand pre-eminent—also *Mrs. Leicester's School*, with the ghost story cut out.

Fairies and ghosts were prohibited as unwholesome, and not unwisely. The one would have been enervating to me, and the other would have been a definite addition to Clarence's stock of horrors. Indeed, one story had been cut out of Crabbe's *Tales*, and another out of an Annual presented to Emily, but not before Griff had read the latter, and the version he related to us probably lost nothing in the telling; indeed, to this day I recollect the man, wont to slay the harmless cricket on the hearth, and in a storm at sea pursued by a gigantic cockroach and thrown overboard. The night after hearing this choice legend Clarence was found crouching beside me in bed for fear of the cockroach. I am afraid the vengeance was more than proportioned to the offence!

Even during my illness that brave mother struggled to teach my brothers' daily lessons, and my father heard them a short bit of Latin grammar at his breakfast (five was thought in those days to be the fit age to begin it, and fathers the fit teachers thereof). And he continued to give this morning lesson when, on our return from airing at Ramsgate after our recovery from the measles, my mother found she must submit to transfer us to a daily governess.

Old Miss Newton's attainments could not have been great, for her answers to my inquiries were decidedly funny, and prefaced *sotto voce* with, 'What a child it is!' But she was a good kindly lady, who had the faculty of teaching, and of forestalling rebellion; and her little thin corkscrew curls, touched with gray, her pale eyes, prim black silk apron, and sandalled shoes, rise before me full of happy associations of tender kindness and patience. She was wise, too, in her own simple way. When nurse would have forewarned her of Clarence's failings in his own hearing, she cut the words short by declaring that she should like never to find out which was the naughty one. And when habit was too strong, and he had denied the ink spot on the atlas, she persuasively wiled out a confession not only to her but to mamma, who hailed the avowal as the beginning of better things, and kissed instead of punishing.

Clarence's queries had been snubbed into reserve, and I doubt whether Miss Newton's theoretic theology was very much more developed than that of Mrs. Gooch, but her practice and devotion were admirable, and she fostered religious sentiment among us, introducing little books which were welcome in the restricted range of Sunday reading. Indeed, Mrs. Sherwood's have some literary merit, and her *Fairchild Family* indulged in such delicious and eccentric acts of naughtiness as quite atoned for all the religious teaching, and fascinated Griff, though he was apt to be very impatient of certain little affectionate lectures to which Clarence listened meekly. My father and mother were both of the old-fashioned orthodox school, with minds formed on Jeremy Taylor, Blair, South, and Secker, who thought it their duty to go diligently to church twice on Sunday, communicate four times a year (their only opportunities), after grave and serious preparation, read a sermon to their household on Sunday evenings, and watch over their children's religious instruction, though in a reserved undemonstrative manner. My father always read one daily chapter with us every morning, one Psalm at family prayers, and my mother made us repeat a few verses of Scripture before our other studies began; besides which there was special teaching on Sunday, and an abstinence from amusements, such

as would now be called Sabbatarian, but a walk in the Park with papa was so much esteemed that it made the day a happy and honoured one to those who could walk.

There was little going into society, comparatively, for people in our station,—solemn dinner-parties from time to time—two a year, did we give, and then the house was turned upside down,—and now and then my father dined out, or brought a friend home to dinner; and there were so-called morning calls in the afternoon, but no tea-drinking. For the most part the heads of the family dined alone at six, and afterwards my father read aloud some book of biography or travels, while we children were expected to employ ourselves quietly, threading beads, drawing, or putting up puzzles, and listen or not as we chose, only not interrupt, as we sat at the big, central, round, mahogany table. To this hour I remember portions of Belzoni's Researches and Franklin's terrible American adventures, and they bring back tones of my father's voice. As an authority 'papa' was seldom invoked, except on very serious occasions, such as Griffith's audacity, Clarence's falsehood, or my obstinacy; and then the affair was formidable. He was judicial and awful, and, though he would graciously forgive on signs of repentance, he never was sympathetic. He had not married young, and there were forty years or

more between him and his sons, so that he had left too far behind him the feelings of boyhood to make himself one with us, even if he had thought it right or dignified to do so,—yet I cannot describe the depth of the respect and loyalty he inspired in us, nor the delight we felt in a word of commendation or a special attention from him.

The early part of Miss Newton's rule was unusually fertile in such pleasures, and much might have been spared, could Clarence have been longer under her influence; but Griff grew beyond her management, and was taunted by 'fellows in the Square' into assertions of manliness, such as kicking his heels, stealing her odd little fringed parasol, pitching his books into the area, keeping her in misery with his antics during their walks, and finally leading Clarence off after Punch into the Rookery of St. Giles's, where she could not follow, because Emily was in her charge.

This was the crisis. She had to come home without the boys, and though they arrived long before any of the authorities knew of their absence, she owned with tears that she could not conscientiously be responsible any longer for Griffith,—who not only openly defied her authority, but had found out how little she knew, and laughed at her. I have reason to believe also that my mother had discovered that she frequented the preachings of

Rowland Hill and Baptist Noel ; and had confiscated some unorthodox tracts presented to the servants, thus being alarmed lest she should implant the seeds of dissent.

Parting with her after four years under her was a real grief. Even Griff was fond of her ; when once emancipated, he used to hug her and bring her remarkable presents, and she heartily loved her tormentor. Everybody did. It remained a great pleasure to get her to spend an evening with us while the elders were gone out to dinner ; nor do I think she ever did us anything but good, though I am afraid we laughed at 'Old Newton' as we grew older and more conceited. We never had another governess. My mother read and enforced diligence on Emily and me, and we had masters for different studies ; the two boys went to school ; and when Martyn began to emerge from babyhood, Emily was his teacher.

CHAPTER III.

WIN AND SLOW.

‘The rude will shuffle through with ease enough :
Great schools best suit the sturdy and the rough.’

COWPER.

AT school Griffith was very happy, and brilliantly successful, alike in study and sport, though sports were not made prominent in those days, and triumphs in them were regarded by the elders with doubtful pride, lest they should denote a lack of attention to matters of greater importance. All his achievements were, however, poured forth by himself and Clarence to Emily and me, and we felt as proud of them as if they had been our own.

Clarence was industrious, and did not fail in his school work, but when he came home for the holidays there was a cowed look about him, and private revelations were made over my sofa that made my flesh creep. The scars were still visible, caused by having been compelled to grasp the bars of the grate bare-handed; and, what was worse, he had

been suspended outside a third story window by the wrists, held by a schoolfellow of thirteen!

‘But what was Griff about?’ I demanded, with hot tears of indignation.

‘Oh, Win!—that’s what they call him, and me Slow;—he said it would do me good. But I don’t think it did, Eddy. It only makes my heart beat fit to choke me whenever I go near the passage window.’

I could only utter a vain wish that I had been there and able to fight for him, and I attacked Griff on the subject on the first opportunity.

‘Oh!’ was his answer, ‘it is only what all fellows have to bear if there’s no pluck in them. They tried it on upon me, you know, but I soon showed them it would not do’—with the cock of the nose, the flash of the eyes, the clench of the fist, that were peculiarly Griff’s own; and when I pleaded that he might have protected Clarence, he laughed scornfully. ‘As to Slow, wretched being, a fellow can’t help bullying him. It comes as natural as to a cat with a mouse.’ On further and reiterated pleadings, Griff declared, first, that it was the only thing to do Slow any good, or make a man of him; and next, that he heartily wished that Winslow junior had been Miss Clara at once, as the fellows called him—it was really hard on him (Griff) to have such a sneaking little coward tied to him for a junior!

I particularly resented the term *Slow*, for Clarence had lately been the foremost of us in his studies; but the idea that learning had anything to do with the matter was derided, and as time went on, there was vexation and displeasure at his progress not being commensurate with his abilities. It would have been treason to school-boy honour to let the elders know that though a strong, high-spirited popular boy like 'Win' might venture to excel big bullying dunces, such fair game as poor 'Slow' could be terrified into not only keeping below them, but into doing their work for them. To him Cowper's '*Tirocinium*' had only too much sad truth.

As to his old failing, there were no special complaints, but in those pre-Arnoldian times no lofty code of honour was even ideal among school-boys, or expected of them by masters; shuffling was thought natural, and allowances made for faults in indolent despair.

My mother thought the Navy the proper element of boyhood, and her uncle the Admiral promised a nomination,—a simple affair in those happy days, involving neither examination nor competition. Griffith was, however, one of those independent boys who take an aversion to whatever is forced on them as their fate. He was ready and successful with his studies, a hero among his comrades, and pre-

ferred continuing at school to what he pronounced, on the authority of the nautical tales freely thrown in our way, to be the life of a dog, only fit for the fool of the family; besides, he had once been out in a boat, tasted of sea-sickness, and been laughed at. My father was gratified, thinking his brains too good for a midshipman, and pleased that he should wish to tread in his own steps at Harrow and Oxford, and thus my mother could not openly regret his degeneracy when all the rest of us were crazy over *Tom Cringle's Log*, and ready to envy Clarence when the offer was passed on to him, and he appeared in the full glory of his naval uniform. Not much choice had been offered to him. My mother would have thought it shameful and ungrateful to have no son available, my father was glad to have the boy's profession fixed, and he himself was rejoiced to escape from the miseries he knew only too well, and ready to believe that uniform and dirk would make a man of him at once, with all his terrors left behind. Perhaps the chief drawback was that the ladies *would* say, 'What a darling!' affording Griff endless opportunities for the good-humoured mockery by which he concealed his own secret regrets. Did not even Selina Clarkson, whose red cheeks, dark blue eyes, and jetty profusion of shining curls, were our notion of perfect beauty, select the little

naval cadet for her partner at the dancing master's ball ?

In the first voyage, a cruise in the Pacific, all went well. The good Admiral had carefully chosen ship and captain ; there were an excellent set of officers, a good tone among the midshipmen, and Clarence, who was only twelve years old, was constituted the pet of the cockpit. One lad in especial, Coles by name, attracted by Clarence's pleasant gentleness, and impelled by the generosity that shields the weak, became his guardian friend, and protected him from all the roughnesses in his power. If there were a fault in that excellent Coles, it was that he made too much of a baby of his *protégé*, and did not train him to shift for himself : but wisdom and moderation are not characteristics of early youth. At home we had great enjoyment of his long descriptive letters, which came under cover to our father at the Admiralty, but were chiefly intended for my benefit. All were proud of them, and great was my elation when I heard papa relate some fact out of them with the preface, ' My boy tells me, my boy Clarence, in the *Calypso* ; he writes a capital letter.'

How great was our ecstasy when after three years and a half we had him at home again ; handsome, vigorous, well-grown, excellently reported of, fully justifying my mother's assurances

that the sea would make a man of him. There was Griffith in the fifth form and a splendid cricketer, but Clarence could stand up to him now, and Harrovian exploits were tame beside stories of sharks and negroes, monkeys and alligators. There was one in particular, about a whole boat's crew sitting down on what they thought was a fallen tree, but which suddenly swept them all over on their faces, and turned out to be a boa-constrictor, and would have embraced one of them if he had not had the sail of the boat coiled round the mast, and palmed off upon him, when he gorged it contentedly, and being found dead on the next landing, his skin was used to cover the captain's sea-chest. Clarence declined to repeat this tale and many others before the elders, and was displeased with Emily for referring to it in public. As to his terrors, he took it for granted that an officer of H.M.S. *Calypso*, had left them behind, and in fact, he naturally forgot and passed over what he had not been shielded from, while his hereditary love of the sea really made those incidental to his profession much more endurable than the bullying he had undergone at school.

We were very happy that Christmas, and very proud of our boys. One evening we were treated to a box at the pantomime, and even I was able to go to it. We put our young sailor and our

sister in the forefront, and believed that every one was as much struck with them as with the wonderful transformations of Goody-Two-Shoes under the wand of Harlequin. Brother-like, we might tease our one girl, and call her an affected little pussy cat, but our private opinion was that she excelled all other damsels with her bright blue eyes and pretty curling hair, which had the same chestnut shine as Griff's—enough to make us correct possible vanity by terming it red, though we were ready to fight any one else who presumed to do so. Indeed Griff had defended its hue in single combat, and his eye was treated for it with beefsteak by Peter in the pantry. We were immensely, though silently, proud of her in her white embroidered cambric frock, red sash and shoes, and coral necklace, almost an heirloom, for it had been brought from Sicily in Nelson's days by my mother's poor young father. How parents and doctors in these days would have shuddered at her neck and arms, bare, not only in the evening, but by day! When she was a little younger she could so shrink up from her clothes that Griff, or little Martyn, in a mischievous mood, would put things down her back, to reappear below her petticoats. Once it was a dead wasp, which descended harmlessly the length of her spine! She was a good-humoured, affectionate, dear sister, my valued companion, submitting patiently to be eclipsed

when Clarence was present, and everything to me in his absence. Sturdy little Martyn too, was held by us to be the most promising of small boys. He was a likeness of Clarence, only stouter, hardier, and without the delicate, girlish, wistful look; imitating Griff in everything, and rather a heavy handful to Emily and me when left to our care, though we were all the more proud of his high spirit, and were fast becoming a mutual admiration society.

What then were our feelings when Griff, always fearless, dashed to the rescue of a boy under whom the ice had broken in St. James' Park, and held him up till assistance came? Martyn, who was with him, was sent home to fetch dry clothes and reassure my mother, which he did by dashing upstairs, shouting, 'Where's mamma? Here's Griff been into the water and pulled out a boy, and they don't know if he is drowned; but he looks—oh!'

Even after my mother had elicited that Martyn's *he* meant the boy, and not Griff, she could not rest without herself going to see that our eldest was unhurt, greet him, and bring him home. What happy tears stood in her eyes, how my father shook hands with him, how we drank his health after dinner, and how ungrateful I was to think Clarence deserved his name of Slow for having stayed at home to play chess with me because my back was aching, when he might have been winning the like honours! How

red and gruff and shy the hero looked, and how he entreated no one to say any more about it!

He would not even look publicly at the paragraph about it in the paper, only vituperating it for having made him into 'a juvenile Etonian,' and hoping no one from Harrow would guess whom it meant.

I found that paragraph the other day in my mother's desk, folded over the case of the medal of the Royal Humane Society, which Griff affected to despise, but which, when he was well out of the way, used to be exhibited on high days and holidays. It seems now like the boundary mark of the golden days of our boyhood, and unmitigated hopes for one another.

CHAPTER IV.

UBI LAPsus, QUID FECI.

‘Clarence is come—false, fleeting, perjured Clarence.’

King Richard III.

THERE was much stagnation in the Navy in those days in the reaction after the great war; and though our family had fair interest at the Admiralty, it was seven months before my brother went to sea again. To me they were very happy months, with my helper of helpers, companion of companions, who made possible to me many a little enterprise that could not be attempted without him. My father made him share my studies, and thus they became doubly pleasant. And oh, ye boys! who murmur at the Waverley Novels as a dry holiday task, ye may envy us the zest and enthusiasm with which we devoured them in their freshness. Strangely enough, the last that we read together was the *Fair Maid of Perth*.

Clarence and his friend Coles longed to sail together again, but Coles was shelved; and when

Clarence's appointment came at last, it was to the brig *Clotho*, Commander Brydone, going out in the Mediterranean Fleet, under Sir Edward Codrington. My mother did not like brigs, and my father did not like what he heard of the captain; but there had been jealous murmurs about appointments being absorbed by sons of officials—he durst not pick and choose; and the Admiral pronounced that if the lad had been spoilt on board the *Calypso*, it was time for him to rough it—a dictum whence there was no appeal.

Half a year later the tidings of the victory of Navarino rang through Europe, and were only half welcome to the conquerors; but in our household it is connected with a terrible recollection. Though more than half a century has rolled by, I shrink from dwelling on the shock that fell on us when my father returned from Somerset House with such a countenance that we thought our sailor had fallen; but my mother could brook the fact far less than if her son had died a gallant death. The *Clotho* was on her way home, and Midshipman William Clarence Winslow was to be tried by court-martial for insubordination, disobedience, and drunkenness. My mother was like one turned to stone. She would hardly go out of doors; she could scarcely bring herself to go to church; she would have had my father give up his situation if there had been any

other means of livelihood. She could not talk ; only when my father sighed, ‘ We should never have put him into the Navy,’ she hotly replied,

‘ How was I to suppose that a son of mine would be like that ?’

Emily cried all day and all night. Some others would have felt it a relief to have cried too. In more furious language than parents in those days tolerated, Griff wrote to me his utter disbelief, and how he had punched the heads of fellows who presumed to doubt that it was not all a rascally, villainous plot.

When the time came my father went down by the night mail to Portsmouth. He could scarcely bear to face the matter ; but, as he said, he could not have it on his conscience if the boy did anything desperate for want of some one to look after him. Besides, there might be some explanation.

‘ Explanation,’ said my mother bitterly. ‘ That there always is !’

The ‘ explanation ’ was this—I have put together what came out in evidence, what my father and the Admiral heard from commiserating officers, and what at different times I learned from Clarence himself. Captain Brydone was one of the rough old description of naval men, good sailors and stern disciplinarians, but wanting in any sense of moral duties towards their ship’s company. His lieutenant

was of the same class, soured, moreover, by tardy promotion, and prejudiced against a gentleman-like, fair-faced lad, understood to have interest, and bearing a name that implied it. Of the other two midshipmen, one was a dull lad of low stamp, the other a youth of twenty, a born bully, with evil as well as tyrannical propensities;—the crew conforming to severe discipline on board, but otherwise wild and lawless. In such a ship a youth with good habits, sensitive conscience, and lack of moral or physical courage, could not but lead a life of misery, losing every day more of his self-respect and spirit as he was driven to the evil he loathed, dreading the consequences, temporal and eternal, with all his soul, yet without resolution or courage to resist.

As every one knows, the battle of Navarino came on suddenly, almost by mistake; and though it is perhaps no excuse, the hurly-burly and horror burst upon him at unawares. Though the English loss was comparatively very small, the *Clotho* was a good deal exposed, and two men were killed—one so close to Clarence that his clothes were splashed with blood. This entirely unnerved him; he did not even know what he did, but he was not to be found when required to carry an order, and was discovered hidden away below, shuddering, in his berth, and then made some shallow excuse about misunderstanding orders. Whether this would have been brought up

against him under other circumstances, or whether it would have been remembered that great men, including Charles V. and Henri IV., have had their *moment de peur*, I cannot tell; but there were other charges. I cannot give date or details. There is no record among the papers before me; and I can only vaguely recall what could hardly be read for the sense of agony, was never discussed, and was driven into the most oblivious recesses of the soul fifty years ago. There was a story about having let a boat's crew, of which he was in charge, get drunk and over-stay their time. One of them deserted; and apparently prevarication ran to the bounds of perjury, if it did not overpass them. (*N.B.*—Seeing seamen flogged was one of the sickening horrors that haunted Clarence in the *Clotho*.) Also, when on shore at Malta with the young man whose name I will not record—his evil genius—he was beguiled or bullied into a wine-shop, and while not himself was made the cat's-paw of some insolent practical joke on the lieutenant; and when called to account, was so bewildered and excited as to use unpardonable language.

Whatever it might have been in detail, so much was proved against him that he was dismissed his ship, and his father was recommended to withdraw him from the service, as being disqualified by want of nerve. Also, it was added more privately, that

such vicious tendencies needed home restraint. The big bully, his corrupter, bore witness against him, but did not escape scot free, for one of the captains spoke to him in scathing tones of censure.

Whenever my mother was in trouble, she always re-arranged the furniture, and a family crisis was always heralded by a revolution of chairs, tables, and sofas. She could not sit still under suspense, and, during these terrible days the entire house underwent a setting to rights. Emily attended upon her, and I sat and dusted books. No doubt it was much better for us than sitting still. My father's letter came by the morning mail, telling us of the sentence, and that he and our poor culprit, as he said, would come home by the Portsmouth coach in the evening.

One room was already in order when Sir John Griffith kindly came to see whether he could bring any comfort to a spirit which would infinitely have preferred death to dishonour, and was, above all, shocked at the lack of physical courage. Never had I liked our old Admiral so well as when I heard how his chief anger was directed against the general mismanagement, and the cruelty of blighting a poor lad's life when not yet seventeen. His father might have been warned to remove him without the public scandal of a court-martial and dismissal.

‘The guilt and shame would have been all the same to us,’ said my mother.

‘Come, Mary, don’t be hard on the poor fellow. In quiet times like these a poor boy can’t look over the wall where one might have stolen a horse, ay, or a dozen horses, when there was something else to think about!’

‘You would not have forgiven such a thing, sir.’

‘It never would have happened under me, or in any decently-commanded ship!’ he thundered. ‘There wasn’t a fault to be found with him in the *Calypso*. What possessed Winslow to let him sail with Brydone? But the service is going,’ etc. etc., he ran on—forgetting that it was he himself who had been unwilling, perhaps rightly, to press the Duke of Clarence for an appointment to a crack frigate for his namesake. However, when he took leave he repeated, as he kissed my mother, ‘Mind, Mary, don’t be set against the lad. That’s the way to make ’em desperate, and he is a mere boy, after all.’

Poor mother, it was not so much hardness as a wounded spirit that made her look so rigid. It might have been better if the return could have been delayed so as to make her yearn after her son, but there was nowhere for him to go, and the coach was already on its way. How strange it was to feel the wonted glow at Clarence’s return coupled with a frightful sense of disgrace and depression.

The time was far on in October, and it was thus quite dark when the travellers arrived, having walked from Charing Cross, where the coach set them down. My father came in first, and my mother clung to him as if he had been absent for weeks, while all the joy of contact with my brother swept over me, even though his hand hung limp in mine, and was icy cold like his cheeks. My father turned to him with one of the little set speeches of those days. 'Here is our son, Mary, who has promised me to do his utmost to retrieve his character, as far as may be possible, and happily he is still young.'

My mother's embrace was in a sort of mechanical obedience to her husband's gesture, and her voice was not perhaps meant to be so severe as it sounded when she said, 'You are very cold—come and warm yourself.'

They made room for him by the fire, and my father stood up in front of it, giving particulars of the journey. Emily and Martyn were at tea in the nursery, in a certain awe that hindered them from coming down; indeed, Martyn seems to have expected to see some strange transformation in his brother. Indeed, there was alteration in the absence of the blue and gold, and, still more, in the loss of the lightsome, hopeful expression from the young face.

There is a picture of Ary Scheffer's of an old knight, whose son had fled from the battle, cutting

the tablecloth in two between himself and the unhappy youth. Like that stern baron's countenance was that with which my mother sat at the head of the dinner-table, and we conversed by jerks about whatever we least cared for, as if we could hide our wretchedness from Peter. When the children appeared each gave Clarence the shyest of kisses, and they sat demurely on their chairs on either side of my father to eat their almonds and raisins, after which we went upstairs, and there was the usual reading. It is curious, but though none of us could have told at the time what it was about, on turning over not long ago a copy of Head's *Pampas and Andes*, one chapter struck me with an intolerable sense of melancholy, such as the bull chases of South America did not seem adequate to produce; and by and by I remembered that it was the book in course of being read at that unhappy period. My mother went on as diligently as ever with some of those perpetual shirts which seemed to be always in hand except before company, when she used to do tambour work for Emily's frocks. Clarence sat the whole time in a dark corner, never stirring, except that he now and then nodded a little. He had gone through many wakeful, and worse than wakeful, nights of wretched suspense, and now the worst was over!

Family prayers took place, chill good-nights were

exchanged, and nobody interfered with his helping me up to my bedroom as usual; but there was something in his face to which I durst not speak, though perhaps I looked, for he exclaimed, 'Don't, Ned!' wrung my hand, and sped away to his own quarters higher up. Then came a sound which made me open my door to listen. Dear little Emily! She had burst out of her own room in her dressing-gown, and flung herself upon her brother as he was plodding wearily upstairs in the dark, clinging round his neck sobbing, 'Dear, dear Clarry! I can't bear it! I don't care. You're my own dear brother, and they are all wicked, horrid people.'

That was all I heard, except hushings on Clarence's part, as if the opening of my door and the thread of light from it warned him that there was risk of interruption. He seemed to be dragging her up to her own room, and I was left with a pang at her being foremost in comforting him.

My father enacted that he should be treated as usual. But how could that be when papa himself did not know how changed were his own ways from his kindly paternal air of confidence? All trust had been undermined, so that Clarence could not cross the threshold without being required to state his object, and, if he overstayed the time calculated, he was cross-examined, and his replies received with a sigh of doubt.

He hung about the house, not caring to do much, except taking me out in my Bath chair or languidly reading the most exciting books he could get;—but there was no great stock of sensation then, except the Byronic, and from time to time one of my parents would exclaim, ‘Clarence, I wonder you can find nothing more profitable to occupy yourself with than trash like that!’

He would lay down the book without a word, and take up Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* or Smollett’s *England*—the profitable studies recommended, and speedily become lost in a dejected reverie, with fixed eyes and drooping lips.

CHAPTER V.

A HELPING HAND.

‘Though hawks can prey through storms and winds,
The poor bee in her hive must dwell.’—HENRY VAUGHAN.

IN imagination the piteous dejection of our family seems to have lasted for ages, but on comparison of dates it is plain that the first lightening of the burthen came in about a fortnight’s time.

The firm of Frith and Castleford was coming to the front in the Chinese trade. The junior partner was an old companion of my father’s boyhood; his London abode was near at hand, and he was a kind of semi-godfather to both Clarence and me, having stood proxy for our nominal sponsors. He was as good and open-hearted a man as ever lived, and had always been very kind to us; but he was scarcely welcome when my father, finding that he had come up alone to London to see about some repairs to his house, while his family were still in the country, asked him to dine and sleep—our first guest since our misfortune.

My mother could hardly endure to receive any one, but she seemed glad to see my father become animated and like himself while Roman Catholic Emancipation was vehemently discussed, and the ruin of England hotly predicted. Clarence moped about silently as usual, and tried to avoid notice, and it was not till the next morning—after breakfast, when the two gentlemen were in the dining-room, nearly ready to go their several ways, and I was in the window awaiting my classical tutor—that Mr. Castleford said,

‘May I ask, Winslow, if you have any plans for that poor boy?’

‘Edward?’ said my father, almost wilfully misunderstanding. ‘His ambition is to be curator of something in the British Museum, isn’t it?’

Mr. Castleford explained that he meant the other, and my father sadly answered that he hardly knew; he supposed the only thing was to send him to a private tutor, but where to find a fit one he did not know and besides, what could be his aim? Sir John Griffith had said he was only fit for the Church, ‘But one does not wish to dispose of a tarnished article there.’

‘Certainly not,’ said Mr. Castleford; and then he spoke words that rejoiced my heart, though they only made my father groan, bidding him remember that it was not so much actual guilt as the acci-

dent of Clarence's being in the Navy that had given so serious a character to his delinquencies. If he had been at school, perhaps no one would ever have heard of them, 'Though I don't say,' added the good man, casting a new light on the subject, 'that it would have been better for him in the end.' Then, quite humbly, for he knew my mother especially had a disdain for trade, he asked what my father would think of letting him give Clarence work in the office for the present. 'I know,' he said, 'it is not the line your family might prefer, but it is present occupation; and I do not think you could well send a youth who has seen so much of the world back to schooling. Besides, this would keep him under your own eye.'

My father was greatly touched by the kindness, but he thought it right to set before Mr. Castleford the very worst side of poor Clarence; declaring that he durst not answer for a boy who had never, in spite of pains and punishments, learnt to speak truth at home or abroad, repeating Captain Brydone's dreadful report, and even adding that, what was most grievous of all, there was an affectation of piety about him that could scarcely be anything but self-deceit and hypocrisy. 'Now,' he said, 'my eldest son, Griffith, is just a boy, makes no profession, is not—as I am afraid you have seen—exemplary at church, when Clarence sits as meek as a mouse,

but then he is always above-board, frank and straightforward. You know where to have a high-spirited fellow, who will tame down, but you never know what will come next with the other. I sometimes wonder for what error of mine Providence has seen fit to give me such a son.'

Just then an important message came for Mr. Winslow, and he had to hurry away, but Mr. Castleford still remained, and presently said,

'Edward, I should like to know what your eyes have been trying to say all this time.'

'Oh, sir,' I burst out, 'do give him a chance. Indeed he never means to do wrong. The harm is not in him. He would have been the best of us all if he had only been let alone.'

Those were exactly my own foolish words, for which I could have beaten myself afterwards; but Mr. Castleford only gave a slight grave smile, and said, 'You mean that your brother's real defect is in courage, moral and physical.'

'Yes,' I said, with a great effort at expressing myself. 'When he is frightened, or bullied, or brow-beaten, he does not know what he is doing or saying. He is quite different when he is his own self; only nobody can understand.'

Strange that though the favoured home son and nearly sixteen years old, it would have been impossible to utter so much to one of our parents. Indeed

the last sentence *felt* so disloyal that the colour burnt in my cheeks as the door opened; but it only admitted Clarence, who, having heard the front door shut, thought the coast was clear, and came in with a load of my books and dictionaries.

‘Clarence,’ said Mr. Castleford, and the direct address made him start and flush, ‘supposing your father consents, should you be willing to turn your mind to a desk in my counting-house?’

He flushed deeper red, and his fingers quivered as he held by the table. ‘Thank you, sir. Anything—anything,’ he said hesitatingly.

‘Well,’ said Mr. Castleford, with the kindest of voices, ‘let us have it out. What is in your mind? You know, I’m a sort of godfather to you.’

‘Sir, if you would only let me have a berth on board one of your vessels, and go right away.’

‘Aye, my poor boy, that’s what you would like best, I’ve no doubt; but look at Edward’s face there, and think what that would come to at the best!’

‘Yes, I know I have no right to choose,’ said Clarence, drooping his head as before.

‘’Tis not that, my dear lad,’ said the good man, ‘but that packing you off like that, among your inferiors in breeding and everything else, would put an end to all hope of your redeeming the past—outwardly I mean, of course—and lodge you in a

position of inequality to your brothers and sister, and all——’

‘That’s done already,’ said Clarence.

‘If you were a man grown it might be so,’ returned Mr. Castleford, ‘but bless me, how old are you?’

‘Seventeen next 1st of November,’ said Clarence.

‘Not a bit too old for a fresh beginning,’ said Mr. Castleford cheerily. ‘God helping you, you will be a brave and good man yet, my boy——’ then as my master rang at the door——‘Come with me and look at the old shop.’

Poor Clarence muttered something unintelligible, and I had to own for him that he never went out without accounting for himself. Whereupon our friend caused my mother to be hunted up, and explained to her that he wanted to take Clarence out with him—making some excuse about something they were to see together.

That walk enabled him to say something which came nearer to cheering Clarence than anything that had passed since that sad return, and made him think that to be connected with Mr. Castleford was the best thing that could befall him. Mr. Castleford on his side told my father that he was sure that the boy was good-hearted all the time, and thoroughly repentant; but this had the less effect because plausibility, as my father called it,

was one of the qualities that specially annoyed him in Clarence, and made him fear that his friend might be taken in. However, the matter was discussed between the elders, and it was determined that this most friendly offer should be accepted experimentally. It was impressed on Clarence, with unnecessary care, that the line of life was inferior; but that it was his only chance of regaining anything like a position, and that everything depended on his industry and integrity.

‘Integrity!’ commented Clarence, with a burning spot on his cheek after one of these lectures; ‘I believe they think me capable of robbing the office!’

We found out, too, that the senior partner, Mr. Frith, a very crusty old bachelor, did not like the appointment, and that it was made quite against his will. ‘You’ll be getting your clerks next from Newgate!’ was what some amiable friend reported him to have said. However, Mr. Castleford had his way, and Clarence was to begin his work with the New Year, being in the meantime cautioned and lectured on the crime and danger of his evil propensities more than he could well bear. ‘Oh!’ he groaned, ‘it serves me right, I know that very well, but if my father only knew how I hate and abhor all those things—and how I loathed them at the very time I was dragged into them!’

‘Why don’t you tell him so?’ I asked.

‘That would make it no better.’

‘It is not so bad as if you had gone into it willingly, and for your own pleasure.’

‘He would only think that another lie.’

No more could be said, for the idea of Clarence’s untruthfulness and depravity had become so deeply rooted in our father’s mind that there was little hope of displacing it, and even at the best his manner was full of grave constrained pity. Those few words were Clarence’s first approach to confidence with me, but they led to more, and he knew there was one person who did not believe the defect was in the bent of his will so much as in its strength.

All the time the prospect of the counting-house in comparison with the sea was so distasteful to him that I was anxious whenever he went out alone, or even with Griffith, who despised the notion of, as he said, sitting on a high stool, dealing in tea, so much that he was quite capable of aiding and abetting in an escape from it. Two considerations, however, held Clarence back; one, the timidity of nature which shrank from so violent a step, and the other, the strong affections that bound him to his home, though his sojourn there was so painful. He knew the misery his flight would have been to me; indeed I took care to let him see it.

And Griffith's return was like a fresh spring wind dispersing vapours. He had gained an excellent scholarship at Brazenose, and came home radiant with triumph, cheering us all up, and making a generous use of his success. He was no letter-writer, and after learning that the disaster and disgrace were all too certain, he ignored the whole, and hailed Clarence on his return as if nothing had happened. As eldest son, and almost a University man, he could argue with our parents in a manner we never presumed on. At least I cannot aver what he actually uttered, but probably it was a revised version of what he thundered forth to me. 'Such nonsense! such a shame to keep the poor beggar going about with that hang dog look, as if he had done for himself for life! Why, I've known fellows do ever so much worse of their own accord, and nothing come of it. If it was found out, there might be a row and a flogging, and there was an end of it. As to going about mourning, and keeping the whole house in doleful dumps, as if there was never to be any good again, it was utter folly, and so I've told Bill, and papa and mamma, both of them!'

How this was administered, or how they took it, there is no knowing, but Griff would neither skate nor go to the theatre, nor to any other diversion, without his brother; and used much kindly force

and banter to unearth him from his dismal den in the back drawing-room. He was only let alone when there were engagements with friends, and indeed, when meetings in the streets took place, by tacit agreement, Clarence would shrink off in the crowd as if not belonging to his companion; and these were the moments that stung him into longing to flee to the river, and lose the sense of shame among common sailors: but there was always some good angel to hold him back from desperate measures—chiefly just then, the love between us three brothers, a love that never cooled throughout our lives, and which dear old Griff made much more apparent at this critical time than in the old Win and Slow days of school. That return of his enlivened us all, and removed the terrible constraint from our meals, bringing us back, as it were, to ordinary life and natural intercourse among ourselves and with our neighbours.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION.

‘But when I lay upon the shore,
Like some poor wounded thing,
I deemed I should not evermore
Refit my wounded wing.
Nailed to the ground and fastened there,
This was the thought of my despair.’

ABP. TRENCH.

CLARENCE'S debut at the office was not wholly unsuccessful. He wrote a good hand, and had a good deal of method and regularity in his nature, together with a real sense of gratitude to Mr. Castleford; and this bore him through the weariness of his new employment, and, what was worse, the cold reception he met with from the other clerks. He was too quiet and reserved for the wilder spirits, too much of a gentleman for others, and in the eyes of the managers, and especially of the senior partner, a disgraced, untrustworthy youth foisted on the office by Mr. Castleford's weak partiality. That old Mr. Frith had, Clarence used to say, a perfectly venomous way of accepting his salute, and seemed

always surprised and disappointed if he came in in time, or showed up correct work. Indeed, the old man was disliked and feared by all his subordinates as much as his partner was loved; and while Mr. Castleford, with his good-natured Irish wife and merry family, lived a life as cheerful as it was beneficent, Mr. Frith dwelt entirely alone, in rooms over the office, preserving the habits formed when his income had been narrow, and mistrusting everybody.

At the end of the first month of experiment, Mr. Castleford declared himself contented with Clarence's industry and steadiness, and permanent arrangements were made, to which Clarence submitted with an odd sort of passive gratitude, such as almost angered my father, who little knew how trying the position really was, nor how a certain home-sickness for the seafaring life was tugging at the lad's heart, and making each morning's entrance at the counting-house an effort—each merchant-captain, redolent of the sea, an object of envy. My mother would have sympathised here, but Clarence feared her more than my father, and she was living in continual dread of some explosion, so that her dark curls began to show streaks of gray, and her face to lose its round youthfulness.

Lent brought the question of Confirmation. Under the influence of good Bishop Blomfield, and in the wave of evangelical revival—then at its flood height

—Confirmation was becoming a more prominent subject with religious people than it had probably ever been in our Church, and it was recognised that some preparation was desirable beyond the power of repeating the Church Catechism. This was all that had been required of my father at Harrow. My mother's godfather, a dignified clergyman, had simply said, 'I suppose, my dear, you know all about it;' and as for the Admiral, he remarked, 'Confirmed! I never was confirmed anything but a post-captain!'

Our incumbent was more attentive to his duties, or rather recognised more duties, than his predecessor. He preached on the subject, and formed classes, sixteen being then the limit of age,—since the idea of the vow, having become far more prominent than that of the blessing, it was held that full development of the will and understanding was needful.

I was of the requisite age, and my father spoke to the clergyman, who called, and, as I could not attend the classes, gave me books to read and questions to answer. Clarence read and discussed the questions with me, showing so much more insight into them, and fuller knowledge of Scripture than I possessed, that I exclaimed, 'Why should you not go up for Confirmation too?'

'No,' he answered mournfully. 'I must take no

more vows if I can't keep them. It would just be profane.'

I had no more to say ; indeed, my parents held the same view. It was good Mr. Castleford who saw things differently. He was a clergyman's son, and had been bred up in the old orthodoxy, which was just beginning to put forth fresh shoots, and, as a quasi-godfather, he held himself bound to take an interest in our religious life, while the sponsors, whose names stood in the family Bible, and whose spoons reposed in the plate-chest, never troubled themselves on the matter. I remember Clarence leaning over me and saying, 'Mr. Castleford thinks I might be confirmed. He says it is not so much the promise we make as of coming to Almighty God for strength to keep what we are bound by already ! He is going to speak to papa.'

Perhaps no one except Mr. Castleford could have prevailed over the fear of profanation in the mind of my father, who was, in his old-fashioned way, one of the most reverent of men, and could not bear to think of holy things being approached by one under a stigma, nor of exposing his son to add to his guilt by taking and breaking further pledges. However, he was struck by his friend's arguments, and I heard him telling my mother that when he had wished to wait till there had been time to prove sincerity of repentance by a course of steadiness, the answer had

been that it was hard to require strength, while denying the means of grace. My mother was scarcely convinced, but as he had consented she yielded without a protest; and she was really glad that I should have Clarence at my side to help me at the ceremony. The clergyman was applied to, and consented to let Clarence attend the classes, where his knowledge, comprehension, and behaviour were exemplary, so that a letter was written to my father expressive of perfect satisfaction with him. 'There,' said my father, 'I knew it would be so! It is not *that* which I want.'

The Confirmation seemed at the time a very short and perfunctory result of our preparation; and, as things were conducted or misconducted then, involved so much crowding and distress that I recollect very little but clinging to Clarence's arm under a strong sense of my infirmities,—the painful attempt at kneeling, and the big outstretched lawn sleeves while the blessing was pronounced over six heads at once, and then the struggle back to the pew, while the silver-pokered apparitor looked grim at us, as though the maimed and halt had no business to get into the way. Yet this was a great advance upon former Confirmations, and the Bishop met my father afterwards, and inquired most kindly after his lame son.

We were disappointed, and felt that we could not attain to the feelings in the Confirmation poem

in the *Christian Year*—Mr. Castleford's gift to me. Still, I believe that, though encumbered with such a drag as myself, Clarence, more than I did,

‘Felt Him how strong, our hearts how frail,
And longed to own Him to the death.’

But the evangelical belief that dejection ought to be followed by a full sense of pardon and assurance of salvation somewhat perplexed and dimmed our Easter Communion. For one short moment, as Clarence turned to help my father lift me up from the altar-rail, I saw his face and eyes radiant with a wonderful rapt look; but it passed only too fast, and the more than ordinary glimpse his spiritual nature had had made him all the more sad afterwards, when he said, ‘I would give everything to know that there was any steadfastness in my purpose to lead a new life.’

‘But you are leading a new life.’

‘Only because there is no one to bully me,’ he said. Still, there had been no reproach against him all the time he had been at Frith and Castleford's, when suddenly we had a great shock.

Parties were running very high, and there were scurrilous papers about, which my father perfectly abhorred; and one day at dinner, when declaiming against something he had seen, he laid down strict commands that none should be brought into the

house. Then, glancing at Clarence, something possessed him to say, 'You have not been buying any.'

'No, sir,' Clarence answered; but a few minutes later, when we were alone together, the others having left him to help me upstairs, he exclaimed, 'Edward, what is to be done? I didn't buy it; but there is one of those papers in my great-coat pocket. Pollard threw it on my desk; and there was something in it that I thought would amuse you.'

'Oh! why didn't you say so?'

'There I am again! I simply could not, with his eye on me! Miserable being that I am! Oh, where is the spirit of ghostly strength?'

'Helping you now to take it to papa in the study and explain!' I cried; but the struggle in that tall fellow was as if he had been seven years old instead of seventeen, ere he put his hand over his face and gave me his arm to come out into the hall, fetch the paper, and make his confession. Alas! we were too late. The coat had been moved, the paper had fallen out; and there stood my mother with it in her hand, looking at Clarence with an awful stony face of mute grief and reproach, while he stammered forth what he had said before, and that he was about to give it to my father. She turned away, bitterly, contemptuously indignant and incredulous; and my corroborations only served to give both her and my father a certain dread of

Clarence's influence over me, as though I had been either deceived or induced to back him in deceiving them. The unlucky incident plunged him back into the depths, just as he had begun to emerge. Slight as it was, it was no trifle to him, in spite of Griffith's exclamation, 'How absurd! Is a fellow to be bound to give an account of everything he looks at as if he were six years old? Catch me letting my mother pry into my pockets! But you are too meek, Bill; you perfectly invite them to make a row about nothing!'

CHAPTER VII.

THE INHERITANCE.

‘ For he that needs five thousand pound to live
Is full as poor as he that needs but five. .
But if thy son can make ten pound his measure,
Then all thou addest may be called his treasure.’

GEORGE HERBERT.

It was in the spring of 1829 that my father received a lawyer's letter announcing the death of James Winslow, Esquire, of Chantry House, Earlscombe, and inviting him, as heir-at-law, to be present at the funeral and opening of the will. The surprise to us all was great. Even my mother had hardly heard of Chantry House itself, far less as a possible inheritance; and she had only once seen James Winslow. He was the last of the elder branch of the family, a third cousin, and older than my father, who had known him in times long past. When they had last met, the Squire of Chantry House was a married man, with more than one child; my father a young barrister; and as one lived entirely in the country and the other in town,

without any special congeniality, no intercourse had been kept up, and it was a surprise to hear that he had left no surviving children. My father greatly doubted whether being heir-at-law would prove to avail him anything, since it was likely that so distant a relation would have made a will in favour of some nearer connection on his wife's or mother's side. He was very vague about Chantry House, only knowing that it was supposed to be a fair property, and he would hardly consent to take Griffith with him by the Western Royal Mail, warning him and all the rest of us that our expectations would be disappointed.

Nevertheless we looked out the gentlemen's seats in *Paterson's Road Book*, and after much research, for Chantry House lay far off from the main road, we came upon—

‘Chantry House, Earlscombe, the seat of James Winslow, Esquire, once a religious foundation; beautifully situated on a rising ground, commanding an extensive prospect——’

‘A religious foundation!’ cried Emily. ‘It will be a dear delicious old abbey, all Gothic architecture, with cloisters and ruins and ghosts.’

‘Ghosts!’ said my mother severely, ‘what has put such nonsense into your head?’

Nevertheless Emily made up her mind that Chantry House would be another Melrose, and went

about repeating the moonlight scene in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* whenever she thought no one was there to laugh at her.

My father and Griffith returned with the good news that there was no mistake. Chantry House was really his own, with the estate belonging to it, reckoned at £5000 a year, exclusive of a handsome provision to Miss Selby, the niece of the late Mrs. Winslow, a spinster of a certain age, who had lived with her uncle, and now proposed to remove to Bath. Mr. Winslow had, it appeared, lost his only son as a schoolboy, and his daughters, like their mother, had been consumptive. He had always been resolved that the estate should continue in the family; but reluctance to see any one take his son's place had withheld him from making any advances to my father; and for several years past he had been in broken health with failing faculties.

Of course there was much elation. Griff described as charming the place, perched on the southern slope of a wooded hill, with a broad fertile valley lying spread out before it, and the woods behind affording every promise of sport. The house, my father said, was good, odd and irregular, built at different times, but quite habitable, and with plenty of furniture, though he opined that mamma would think it needed modernising, to which she replied that our present chattels would make a great differ-

ence; whereat my father, looking at the effects of more than twenty years of London blacks, gave a little whistle, for she was always the economical one of the pair.

Emily, with glowing cheeks and eager eyes, entreated to know whether it was Gothic, and had a cloister! Papa nipped her hopes of a cloister, but there were Gothic windows and doorway, and a bit of ruin in the garden, a fragment of the old chapel.

My father could not resign his office without notice, and, besides, he wished Miss Selby to have leisure for leaving her home of many years; after which there would be a few needful repairs. The delay was not a great grievance to any of us except little Martyn. We were much more Cockney than almost any one is in these days of railways. We were unusually devoid of kindred on both sides, my father's holidays were short, I was not a very movable commodity, and economy forbade long journeys, so that we had never gone farther than Ramsgate, where we claimed a certain lodging-house as a sort of right every summer.

Real country was as much unknown to us as the backwoods. My father alone had been born and bred to village life and habits, for my mother had spent her youth in a succession of seaport towns, frequented by men-of-war. We heard, too, that Chantry House was very secluded, with only a

few cottages near at hand—a mile and a half from the church and village of Earlscombe, three from the tiny country town of Wattlesea, four from the place where the coach passed, connecting it with the civilisation of Bath and Bristol, from each of which places it was about half a day's distance, according to the measures of those times. It was a sort of banishment to people accustomed to the stream of life in London; and though the consequence and importance derived from being raised to the ranks of the Squirearchy were agreeable, they were a dear purchase at the cost of being out of reach of all our friends and acquaintances, as well as of other advantages.

To my father, however, the retirement from his many years of drudgery was really welcome, and he had preserved enough of country tastes to rejoice that it was, as he said, a clear duty to reside on his estate and look after his property. My mother saw his relief in the prospect, and suppressed her sighs at the dislocation of her life-long habits, and the loss of intercourse with the acquaintance whom separation raised to the rank of intimate friends, even her misgivings as to butchers, bakers, and grocers in the wilderness, and still worse, as to doctors for me.

‘Humph!’ said the Admiral, ‘the boy will be all the better without them.’

And so I was ; I can't say they were the subject of much regret, but I was really sorry to leave our big neighbour, the British Museum, where there were good friends who always made me welcome, and encouraged me in studies of coins and heraldry, which were great resources to me, so that I used to spend hours there, and was by no means willing to resign my ambition of obtaining an appointment there, when I heard my father say that he was especially thankful for his good fortune because it enabled him to provide for me. There were lessons, too, from masters in languages, music, and drawing, which Emily and I shared, and which she had just begun to value thoroughly. We had filled whole drawing-books with wriggling twists of foliage in B B B marking pencil, and had just been promoted to water-colours ; and she was beginning to sing very prettily. I feared, too, that I should no longer have a chance of rivalling Griffith's university studies. All this, with my sister's girl friends, and those kind people who used to drop in to play chess, and otherwise amuse me, would all be left behind ; and, sorest of all, Clarence, who, whatever he was in the eyes of others, had grown to be my mainstay during this last year. He it was who fetched me from the Museum, took me into the gardens, helped me up and down stairs, spared no pains to rout out whatever my fanciful pursuits required from shops in the

City, and, in very truth, spoilt me through all his hours that were free from business, besides being my most perfect sympathising and understanding companion.

I feared, too, that he would be terribly lonesome, though of late he had been less haunted by longings for the sea, had made some way with his fellows, and had been commended by the managing clerk; and it was painful to find the elders did not grieve on their own account at parting with him. My mother told the Admiral that she thought it would be good for Mr. Winslow's spirits not to be continually reminded of his trouble; and my father might be heard confiding to Mr. Castleford that the separation might be good for both her and her son, if only the lad could be trusted. To which that good man replied by giving him an excellent character; but was only met by a sigh, and 'Well, we shall see!'

Clarence was to be lodged with Peter, whose devotion would not extend to following us into barbarism, where, as he told us, he understood there was no such thing as a 'haree,' and master would have to kill his own mutton.

Peter had been tranquilly engaged to Gooch for years untold. They were to be transformed into Mr. and Mrs. Robson, with some small appointment about the Law Courts for him, and a lodging-house

for her, where Clarence was to abide, my mother feeling secure that neither his health, his morals, nor his shirts could go much astray without her receiving warning thereof.

Meanwhile, by the help of an antiquarian friend of my father, Mr. Stafford, who was great in county history, I hunted up in the Museum library all I could discover about our new possession.

The Chantry of St. Cecily at Earlscombe, in Somersetshire, had, it appeared, been founded and endowed by Dame Isabel d'Oyley, in the year of grace 1434, that constant prayers might be offered for the souls of her husband and son, slain in the French wars. The poor lady's intentions, which to our Protestant minds appeared rather shocking than otherwise, had been frustrated at the break up of such establishments, when the Chantry, and the estate that maintained its clerks and bedesmen, was granted to Sir Harry Power, from whom, through two heiresses, it had come to the Fordyces, the last of whom, by name Margaret, had died childless, leaving the estate to her stepson, Philip Winslow, our ancestor.

Moreover, we learnt that a portion of the building was of ancient date, and that there was an 'interesting fragment' of the old chapel in the grounds, which our good friend promised himself the pleasure of investigating on his first holiday.

To add to our newly-acquired sense of consideration and of high pedigree, the family chariot, after taking Miss Selby to Bath, came up post to London to be touched up at the coachbuilder's, have the escutcheon altered so as to impale the Griffith coat instead of the Selby, and finally to convey us to our new abode, in preparation for which all its boxes came to be packed.

A chariot! You young ones have as little notion of one as of a British war-chariot armed with scythes. Yet people of a certain grade were as sure to keep their chariot as their silver tea-pot; indeed we knew one young couple who started in life with no other habitation, but spent their time as nomads, in visits to their relations and friends, for visits *were* visits then.

The capacities of a chariot were considerable. Within, there was a good-sized seat for the principal occupants, and outside a dickey behind, and a driving box before, though sometimes there was only one of these, and that transferable. The boxes were calculated to hold family luggage on a six months' tour. There they lay on the spare-room floor, ready to be packed, the first earnest of our new possessions—except perhaps the five-pound note my father gave each of us four elder ones, on the day the balance at the bank was made over to him. There was the imperial, a grand roomy

receptacle, which was placed on the top of the carriage, and would not always go upstairs in small houses; the capbox, which fitted into a curved place in front of the windows, and could not stand alone, but had a frame to support it; two long narrow boxes with the like infirmity of standing, which fitted in below; square ones under each seat; and a drop box fastened on behind. There were pockets beneath each window, and, curious relic in name and nature of the time when every gentleman carried his weapon, there was the sword case, an excrescence behind the back of the best seat, accessible by lifting a cushion, where weapons used to be carried, but where in our peaceful times travellers bestowed their luncheon and their books.

Our chariot was black above, canary yellow below, beautifully varnished, and with our arms blazoned on each door. It was lined with dark blue leather and cloth, picked out with blue and yellow lace in accordance with our liveries, and was a gorgeous spectacle. I am afraid Emily did not share in Mistress Gilpin's humility when

‘ The chaise was brought,
But yet was not allowed
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud !’

It was then that Emily and I each started a diary to record the events of our new life. Hers

flourished by fits and starts ; but I having perforce more leisure than she, mine has gone on with few interruptions till the present time, and is the backbone of this narrative, which I compile and condense from it and other sources before destroying it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD HOUSE.

‘ Your history whither are you spinning ?

Can you do nothing but describe ?

A house there is, and that’s enough !’—GRAY.

How we did enjoy our journey, when the wrench from our old home was once made. We did not even leave Clarence behind, for Mr. Castleford had given him a holiday, so that he might not appear to be kept at a distance, as if under a cloud, and might help me through our travels.

My mother and I occupied the inside of the carriage, with Emily between us at the outset; but when we were off the London stones she was often allowed to make a third on the dickey with Clarence and Martyn, whose ecstatic heels could be endured for the sake of the free air and the view. Of course we posted, and where there were severe hills we indulged in four horses. The varieties of the jackets of our post-boys, blue or yellow, as supposed to indicate the politics of their inns, were interesting to us, as everything was in-

teresting then. Otherwise their equipment was exactly alike—neat drab corduroy breeches and top-boots, and hats usually white, and they were all boys, though the red faces and grizzled hair of some looked as if they had faced the weather for at least fifty years.

It was a beautiful August, and the harvest fields were a sight perfectly new, filling us with rapture unspeakable. At every hill which offered an excuse, our outsiders were on their feet, thrusting in their heads and hands to us within with exclamations of delight, and all sorts of discoveries—really new to us three younger ones. Ears of corn, bearded barley, graceful oats, poppies, corn-flowers, were all delicious novelties to Emily and me, though Griff and my father laughed at our ecstasies, and my mother occasionally objected to the wonderful accumulation of curiosities thrust into her lap or the door pockets, and tried to persuade Martyn that rooks' wings, dead hedgehogs, sticks and stones of various merits, might be found at Earlscombe, until Clarence, by the judicious purchase of a basket at Salisbury, contrived to satisfy all parties and safely dispose of the treasures. The objects that stand out in my memory on that journey were Salisbury Spire, and a long hill where the hedgebank was one mass of the exquisite rose-bay willow herb—a perfect revelation to our city-bred

eyes; but indeed, the whole route was like one panorama to us of *L'Allegro* and other descriptions on which we had fed. For in those days we were much more devoted to poetry than is the present generation, which has a good deal of false shame on that head.

Even dining and sleeping at an inn formed a pleasing novelty, though we did not exactly sympathise with Martyn when he dashed in at breakfast exulting in having witnessed the killing of a pig. As my father observed, it was too like realising Peter's forebodings of our return to savage life.

Demonstrations were not the fashion of these times, and there was a good deal of dull discontent and disaffection in the air, so that no tokens of welcome were prepared for us—not even a peal of bells; nor indeed should we have heard them if they had been rung, for the church was a mile and a half beyond the house, with a wood between cutting off the sound, except in certain winds. We did not miss a reception, which would rather have embarrassed us. We began to think it was time to arrive, and my father believed we were climbing the last hill, when, just as we had passed a remarkably pretty village and church, Griffith called out to say that we were on our own ground. He had made his researches with the gamekeeper while my father was busy with the

solicitor, and could point to our boundary wall, a little below the top of the hill on the northern side. He informed us that the place we had passed was Hillside—Fordyce property,—but this was Earlscombe, our own. It was a great stony bit of pasture with a few scattered trees, but after the flat summit was past, the southern side was all beechwood, where a gate admitted us into a drive cut out in a slant down the otherwise steep descent, and coming out into an open space. And there we were !

The old house was placed on the widest part of a kind of shelf or natural terrace, of a sort of amphitheatre shape, with wood on either hand, but leaving an interval clear in the midst broad enough for house and gardens, with a gentle green slope behind, and a much steeper one in front, closed in by the beechwoods. The house stood as it were sideways, or had been made to do so by later inhabitants. I know this is very long-winded, but there have been such alterations that without minute description this narrative will be unintelligible.

The aspect was northwards so far as the lie of the ground was concerned, but the house stood across. The main body was of the big symmetrical Louis XIV. style—or, as it is now the fashion to call it, Queen Anne—brick, with stone quoins, big sash-windows, and a great square hall in the midst,

with the chief rooms opening into it. The principal entrance had been on the north, with a huge front door and a flight of stone steps, and just space enough for a gravel coach ring before the rapid grassy descent. Later constitutions, however, must have eschewed that northern front door, and later nerves that narrow verge, and on the eastern front had been added that Gothic porch of which Emily had heard,—and a flagrantly modern Gothic porch it was, flanked by two comical little turrets, with loopholes, from which a thread-paper or Tom Thumb might have defended it. Otherwise it resembled a church porch, except for the formidable points of a sham portcullis; but there was no denying that it greatly increased the comfort of the house, with its two sets of heavy doors, and the seats on either side. The great hall door had been closed up, plastered over within, and rendered inoffensive. Towards the west there was another modern addition of drawing and dining rooms, and handsome bedchambers above, in Gothic taste, *i.e.* with pointed arches filled up with glass over the sash-windows. The drawing-room was very pretty, with a glass door at the end leading into an old-fashioned greenhouse, and two French windows to the south opening upon the lawn, which soon began to slope upwards, curving, as I said, like an amphitheatre, and was always shady and sheltered, tilting its flower-beds towards

the house as if to display them. The dining-room had, in like manner, one west and two north windows, the latter commanding a grand view over the green meadow-land below, dotted with round knolls, and rising into blue hills beyond. We became proud of counting the villages and church towers we could see from thence.

There was a still older portion, more ancient than the square *corps de logis*, and built of the cream-coloured stone of the country. It was at the south-eastern angle, where the ground began sloping so near the house that this wing—if it may so be called—containing two good-sized rooms nearly on a level with the upper floor, had nothing below but some open stone vaultings, under which it was only just possible for my tall brothers to stand upright, at the innermost end. These opened into the cellars which, no doubt, belonged to the fifteenth-century structure. There seemed to have once been a door and two or three steps to the ground, which rose very close to the southern end; but this had been walled up. The rooms had deep mullioned windows east and west, and very handsome groined ceilings, and were entered by two steps down from the gallery round the upper part of the hall. There was a very handsome double staircase of polished oak, shaped like a Y, the stem of which began just opposite the original front door—making us wonder

if people knew what draughts were in the days of Queen Anne, and remember Madame de Maintenon's complaint that health was sacrificed to symmetry. Not far from this oldest portion were some broken bits of wall and stumps of columns, remnants of the chapel, and prettily wreathed with ivy and clematis. We rejoiced in such a pretty and distinctive ornament



to our garden, and never troubled ourselves about the desecration; and certainly ours was one of the most delightful gardens that ever existed, what with green turf, bright flowers, shapely shrubs, and the grand beech-trees enclosing it with their stately white pillars, green foliage, and the russet arcades beneath them. The stillness was wonderful to ears accustomed to the London roar—almost a new sensation. Emily was found, as she said, 'listening to the silence;' and my father declared that no one

could guess at the sense of rest that it gave him.

Of space within there was plenty, though so much had been sacrificed to the hall and staircase; and this was apparently the cause of the modern additions, as the original sitting-rooms, wainscotted and double-doored, were rather small for family requirements. One of these, once the dining-room, became my father's study, where he read and wrote, saw his tenants, and by and by acted as Justice of the Peace. The opposite one, towards the garden, was termed the book-room. Here Martyn was to do his lessons, and Emily and I carry on our studies, and do what she called keeping up her accomplishments. My couch and appurtenances abode there, and it was to be my retreat from company,—or on occasion could be made a supplementary drawing-room, as its fittings showed it had been the parlour. It communicated with another chamber, which became my own—sparing the difficulties that stairs always presented; and beyond lay, niched under the grand staircase, a tiny light closet, a passage-room, where my mother put a bed for a man-servant, not liking to leave me entirely alone on the ground floor. It led to a passage to the garden door, also to my mother's den, dedicated to housewifely cares and stores, and ended at the back stairs, descending to the servants' region. This was very old, hand-

somely vaulted with stone, and, owing to the fall of the ground, had ample space for light on the north side,—where, beyond the drive, the descent was so rapid as to afford Martyn infinite delight in rolling down, to the horror of all beholders and the detriment of his white duck trowsers.

I don't know much about the upper story, so I spare you that. Emily had a hankering for one of the pretty old mullioned-windowed rooms—the mullion chambers, as she named them; but Griff pounced on them at once, the inner for his repose, the outer for his guns and his studies—not smoking, for young men were never permitted to smoke within doors, nor indeed in any home society. The choice of the son and heir was undisputed, and he proceeded to settle his possessions in his new domains, where they made an imposing appearance.

CHAPTER IX.

RATS.

‘As louder and louder, drawing near,
The gnawing of their teeth he could hear.’—SOUTHEY.

‘WHAT a ridiculous old fellow that Chapman is,’ said Griff, coming in from a conference with the gaunt old man who acted as keeper to our not very extensive preserves. ‘I told him to get some gins for the rats in my rooms, and he shook his absurd head like any mandarin, and said, “There baint no trap as will rid you of them kind of varmint, sir.”’

‘Of course,’ my father said, ‘rats are part of the entail of an old house. You may reckon on them.’

‘Those rooms of yours are the very place for them,’ added my mother. ‘I only hope they will not infest the rest of the house.’

To which Griff rejoined that they perpetrated the most extraordinary noises he had ever heard from rats, and told Emily she might be thankful to him for taking those rooms, for she would have been frightened out of her little wits. He meant, he said, to get a little terrier, and have a thorough

good rat hunt, at which Martyn capered about in irrepressible ecstasy.

This, however, was deferred by the unwillingness of old Chapman, of whom even Griff was somewhat in awe. His fame as a sportsman had to be made, and he had had only such practice as could be attained by shooting at a mark ever since he had been aware of his coming greatness. So he was desirous of conciliating Chapman, and not getting laughed at as the London young gentleman who could not hit a hay-stack. My father, who had been used to carrying a gun in his younger days, was much amused, in his quiet way, at seeing Griff watch Chapman off on his rounds, and then betake himself to the locality most remote from the keeper's ears to practise on the rook or crow. Martyn always ran after him, having solemnly promised not to touch the gun, and to keep behind. He was too good-natured to send the little fellow back, though he often tried to elude the pursuit, not wishing for a witness to his attempts; and he never invited Clarence, who had had some experience of curious game but never mentioned it.

Clarence devoted himself to Emily and me, tugging my garden-chair along all the paths where it would go without too much jolting, and when I had had enough, exploring those hanging woods, either with her or on his own account. They used to come

home with their hands full of flowers, and this resulted in a vehement attack of botany,—a taste that has lasted all our lives, together with the *hortus siccus* to which we still make additions, though there has been a revolution there as well as everywhere else, and the Linnæan system we learnt so eagerly from Martin's *Letters* is altogether exploded and antiquated. Still, my sister refuses to own the scientific merits of the natural system, and can point to school-bred and lectured young ladies who have no notion how to discover the name or nature of a live plant.

On the Friday after our arrival the noises had been so fearful that Griff had been exasperated into going off across the hills, accompanied by his constant shadow, Martyn, in search of the professional rat-catcher of the neighbourhood, in spite of Chapman's warning—that Tom Petty was the biggest rascal in the neighbourhood, and a regular out and out poacher; and as to the noises—he couldn't 'tackle the like of they.' After revelling in the beauty of the beechwoods as long as was good for me or for Clarence, I was left in the garden to sketch the ruin, while my two companions started on one of their exploring expeditions.

It was getting late enough to think of going to prepare for the six o'clock dinner when Emily came forth alone from the path between the trees, announc-

ing—‘An adventure, Edward! We have had such an adventure.’

‘Where’s Clarence?’

‘Gone for the doctor! Oh, no; Griff hasn’t shot anybody. He is gone for the ratcatcher, you know. It is a poor little herdboy, who tumbled out of a tree; and oh! such a sweet, beautiful, young lady—just like a book!’

When Emily became less incoherent, it appeared that on coming out on the bit of common above the wood, as she and Clarence were halting on the brow of the hill to admire the view, they heard a call for help, and hurrying down in the direction whence it proceeded they saw a stunted ash-tree, beneath which were a young lady and a little child bending over a village lad who lay beneath moaning piteously. The girl, whom Emily described as the most beautiful creature she ever saw, explained that the boy, who had been herding the cattle scattered around, had been climbing the tree, a limb of which had broken with him. She had seen the fall from a distance, and hurried up; but she hardly knew what to do, for her little sister was too young to be sent in quest of assistance. Clarence thought one leg seriously injured, and as the young lady seemed to know the boy, offered to carry him home. School officers were yet in the future; children were set to work almost as soon as they could walk, and this little

fellow was so light and thin as to shock Clarence when he had been taken up on his back, for he weighed quite a trifle. The young lady showed the way to a wretched little cottage, where a bigger girl had just come in with a sheaf of corn freshly gleaned poised on her head. They sent her to fetch her mother, and Clarence undertook to go for a doctor, but to the surprise and horror of Emily, there was a demur. Something was said of old Molly and her 'ile' and 'yarbs,' or perhaps Madam could step round. When Clarence, on this being translated to him, pronounced the case beyond such treatment, it was explained outside the door that this was a terribly poor family, and the doctor would not come to parish patients for an indefinite time after his summons, besides which, he lived at Wattlesea. 'Indeed mamma does almost all the doctoring with her medicine chest,' said the girl.

On which Clarence declared that he would let the doctor know that he himself would be responsible for the cost of the attendance, and set off for Wattlesea, a kind of town village in the flat below. He could not get back till dinner was half over, and came in alarmed and apologetic; but he had nothing worse to encounter than Griff's unmerciful banter (or, as you would call it, chaff) about his knight errantry, and Emily's lovely heroine in the sweetest of cottage bonnets.

Griff could be slightly tyrannous in his merry mockery, and when he found that on the ensuing day Clarence proposed to go and inquire after the patient, he made such wicked fun of the expectations the pair entertained of hearing the sweet cottage bonnet reading a tract in a silvery voice through the hovel window, that he fairly teased and shamed Clarence out of starting till the renowned Tom Petty arrived and absorbed all the three brothers, and even their father, in delights as mysterious to me as to Emily. How she shrieked when Martyn rushed triumphantly into the room where we were arranging books with the huge patriarch of all the rats dangling by his tail! Three hopeful families were destroyed; rooms, vaults, and cellars examined and cleared; and Petty declared the race to be exterminated, picturesque ruffian that he was, in his shapeless hat, rusty velveteen, long leggings, a live ferret in his pocket, and festoons of dead rats over his shoulder.

Chapman, who regarded him much as the ferret did the rat, declared that the rabbits and hares would suffer from letting 'that there chap' show his face here on any plea; and, moreover, gave a grunt, very like a scoff, at the idea of slumbers in the mullion rooms (as they were called) being secured by his good offices.

And Chapman was right. The unaccountable

noises broke out again—screaming, wailing, sobbing—sounds scarcely within the power of cat or rat, but possibly the effect of the wind in the old building. At any rate, Griff could not stand them, and declared that sleep was impossible when the wind was in that quarter, so that he must shift his bedroom elsewhere, though he still wished to retain the outer apartment, which he had taken pleasure in adorning with his special possessions. My mother would scarcely have tolerated such fancies in any one else, but Griff had his privileges.

CHAPTER X.

OUR TUNEFUL CHOIR.

‘ The church has been whitewashed, but right long ago,
As the cracks and the dinginess amply doth show ;
About the same time that a strange petrification
Confined the incumbent to mere Sunday action.
So many abuses in this place are rife,
The only church things giving token of life
Are the singing within and the nettles without—
Both equally rampant without any doubt.’

F. R. HAVERGAL.

ALL Griff's teasing could not diminish—nay, rather increased—Emily's excitement in the hope of seeing and identifying the sweet cottage bonnet at church on Sunday. The distance we had to go was nearly two miles, and my mother and I drove thither in a donkey chair, which had been hunted up in London for that purpose because the ‘ pheeāton ’ (as the servants insisted on calling it) was too high for me. My father had an old-fashioned feeling about the Fourth Commandment, which made him scrupulous as to using any animal on Sunday ; and even when, in bad weather, or for visitors, the larger carriage was

used, he always walked. He was really angry with Griff that morning for mischievously maintaining that it was a greater breach of the commandment to work an ass than a horse.

It was a pretty drive on a road slanting gradually through the brushwood that clothed the steep face of the hillside, and passing farms and meadows full of cattle—all things quieter and stiller than ever in their Sunday repose. We knew that the living was in Winslow patronage, but that it was in the hands of one of the Selby connection, who held it, together with it is not safe to say how many benefices, and found it necessary for his health to reside at Bath. The vicarage had long since been turned into a farmhouse, and the curate lived at Wattlesea. All this we knew, but we had not realised that he was likewise assistant curate there, and only favoured Earlscombe with alternate morning and evening services on Sundays.

Still less were we prepared for the interior of the church. It had a picturesque square tower covered with ivy, and a general air of fitness for a sketch; indeed, the photograph of it in its present beautified state will not stand a comparison with our drawings of it, in those days of dilapidation in the middle of the untidy churchyard, with little boys astride on the sloping, sunken lichen-grown headstones, mullein spikes and burdock leaves, more

graceful than the trim borders and zinc crosses which are pleasanter to the mental eye.

The London church we had left would be a fearful shock to the present generation, but we were accustomed to decency, order, and reverence ; and it was no wonder that my father was walking about the churchyard, muttering that he never saw such a place, while my brothers were full of amusement. Their spruce looks in their tall hats, bright ties, dark coats, and white trowsers strapped tight under their boots, looked incongruous with the rest of the congregation, the most distinguished members of which were farmers in drab coats with huge mother-of-pearl buttons, and long gaiters buttoned up to their knees and strapped up to their gay waistcoats over their white corduroys. Their wives and daughters were in enormous bonnets, fluttering with ribbons ; but then what my mother and Emily wore were no trifles. The rest of the congregation were—the male part of it—in white or gray smock-frocks, the elderly women in black bonnets, the younger in straw ; but we had not long to make our observations, for Chapman took possession of us. He was parish clerk, and was in great glory in his mourning coat and hat, and his object was to marshal us all into our pew before he had to attend upon the clergyman ; and of course I was glad enough to get as soon as possible out of sight of all the eyes not yet accustomed to my figure.

And hidden enough I was when we had been introduced through the little north chancel door into a black-curtained, black-cushioned, black-lined pew, well carpeted, with a table in the midst, and a stove, whose pipe made its exit through the floriated tracery of the window overhead. The chancel arch was to the west of us, blocked up by a wooden parcel-gilt erection, and to the east a decorated window that would have been very handsome if two side-lights had not been obscured by the two Tables of the Law, with the royal arms on the top of the first table, and over the other our own, with the Fordyce in a scutcheon of pretence; for, as an inscription recorded, they had been erected by Margaret, daughter of Christopher Fordyce, Esquire, of Chantry House, and relict of Sir James John Winslow, Kt., sergeant-at-law, A.D. 1700—the last date, I verily believe, at which anything had been done to the church. And on the wall, stopping up the southern chancel window, was a huge marble slab, supported by angels blowing trumpets, with a very long inscription about the Fordyce family, ending with this same Margaret, who had married the Winslow, lost two or three infants, and died on 1st January 1708, three years later than her husband.

Thus far I could see; but Griff was standing lifting the curtain, and showing by the working of his shoulders his amazement and diversion, so that

only the daggers in my mother's eyes kept Martyn from springing up after him. What he beheld was an altar draped in black like a coffin, and on the step up to the rail, boys and girls eating apples and performing antics to beguile the waiting time, while a row of white-smocked old men occupied the bench opposite to our seat, conversing loud enough for us to hear them.

My father and Clarence came in; the bells stopped; there was a sound of steps, and in the fabric in front of us there emerged a grizzled head and the back of a very dirty surplice besprinkled with iron moulds, while Chapman's back appeared above our curtain, his desk (full of dilapidated prayer-books) being wedged in between us and the reading-desk.

The duet that then took place between him and the curate must have been heard to be credible, especially as, being so close behind the old man, we could not fail to be aware of all the remarkable shots at long words which he bawled out at the top of his voice, and I refrain from recording, lest they should haunt others as they have done by me all my life. Now and then Chapman caught up a long switch and dashed out at some obstreperous child to give an audible whack; and towards the close of the litany he stumped out—we heard his tramp the whole length of the church, and by and by his voice issued from an unknown height, proclaiming—‘Let

us sing to the praise and glory —— in an anthem taken from the 42d chapter of Genesis.’

There was an outburst of bassoon, clarionet, and fiddle, and the performance that followed was the most marvellous we had ever heard, especially when the big butcher—fiddling all the time—declared in a mighty solo, ‘I am Jo—Jo—Jo—Joseph!’ and having reiterated this information four or five times, inquired with equal pertinacity, ‘Doth—doth my fa-a-u-ther yet live?’ Poor Emily was fairly ‘convulsed;’ she stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth, and grew so crimson that my mother was quite frightened, and very near putting her out at the little door of excommunication. To our last hour we shall never forget the shock of that first anthem.

The Commandments were read from the desk, Chapman’s solitary response coming from the gallery; and while the second singing—four verses from Tate and Brady—was going on, we beheld the surplice stripped off,—like the slough of a May-fly, as Griff said,—when a rusty black gown was revealed, in which the curate ascended the pulpit and was lost to our view before the concluding verse of the psalm, which we had reason to believe was selected in compliment to us, as well as to Earlscombe,—

‘My lot is fall’n in that blest land
Where God is truly known,
He fills my cup with liberal hand;
’Tis He—’tis He—’tis He—supports my throne.’

We had great reason to doubt how far the second line could justly be applied to the parish ! but there was no judging of the sermon, for only detached sentences reached us in a sort of mumble. Griff afterwards declared churchgoing to be as good as a comedy, and we all had to learn to avoid meeting each other's eyes, whatever we might hear. When the scuffle and tramp of the departing congregation had ceased, we came forth from our sable box, and beheld the remnants of a once handsome church, mauled in every possible way, green stains on the walls, windows bricked up, and a huge singing gallery. Good bits of carved stall work were nailed anyhow into the pews ; the floor was uneven ; no font was visible ; there was a mouldy uncared-for look about everything. The curate in riding-boots came out of the vestry,—a pale, weary-looking man, painfully meek and civil, with gray hair sleeked round his face. He 'louted low,' and seemed hardly to venture on taking the hand my father held out to him. There was some attempt to enter into conversation with him, but he begged to be excused, for he had to hurry back to Wattlesea to a funeral. Poor man ! he was as great a pluralist as his vicar, for he kept a boys' school, partially day, partially boarding, and his eyes looked hungrily at Martyn.

If the 'sweet cottage bonnet' had been at church there would have been little chance of discovering

her, but we found that we were the only 'quality,' as Chapman called it, or things might not have been so bad. Old James Winslow had been a mere fox-hunting squire till he became a valetudinarian; nor had he ever cared for the church or for the poor, so that the village was in a frightful state of neglect. There was a dissenting chapel, old enough to be overgrown with ivy and not too hideous, erected by the Nonconformists in the reign of the Great Deliverer, but this partook of the general decadence of the parish, and, as we found, the chapel's principal use was to serve as an excuse for not going to church.

My father always went to church twice, so he and Clarence walked to Wattlesea, where appearances were more respectable; but they heard the same sermon over again, and, as my father drily remarked, it was not a composition that would bear repetition.

He was much distressed at the state of things, and intended to write to the incumbent, though, as he said, whatever was done would end by being at his own expense, and the move and other calls left him so little in hand that he sighed over the difficulties, and declared that he was better off in London, except for the honour of the thing. Perhaps my mother was of the same opinion after a dreary afternoon, when Griff and Martyn had been

wandering about aimlessly, and were at length betrayed by the barking of a little terrier, purchased the day before from Tom Petty, besieging the stable cat, who stood with swollen tail, glaring eyes, and thunderous growls, on the top of the tallest pillar of the ruins. Emily nearly cried at their cruelty. Martyn was called off by my mother, and set down, half sulky, half ashamed, to *Henry and his Bearer*; and Griff, vowing that he believed it was that brute who made the row at night, and that she ought to be exterminated, strolled off to converse with Chapman, who was a quaint compound of clerk and keeper—in the one capacity upholding his late master, in the other bemoaning Mr. Mears' unpunctualities, specially as regarded weddings and funerals; one 'corp' having been kept waiting till a messenger had been sent to Wattlesea, who finding both clergy out for the day, had had to go to Hill-side, 'where they was always ready, though the old Squire would have been mad with him if he'd a-guessed one of they Fordys had ever set foot in the parish.'

The only school in the place was close to the meeting-house, 'a very dame's school indeed,' as Emily described it after a peep on Monday. Dame Dearlove, the old woman who presided, was a picture of Shenstone's schoolmistress,—black bonnet, horn spectacles, fearful birch rod, three-cornered buff

'kerchief, checked apron and all, but on meddling with her, she proved a very dragon, the antipodes of her name. Tattered copies of the *Universal Spelling-Book* served her aristocracy, ragged Testaments the general herd, whence all appeared to be shouting aloud at once. She looked sour as verjuice when my mother and Emily entered, and gave them to understand that 'she wasn't used to no strangers in her school, and didn't want 'em.' We found that in Chapman's opinion she 'didn't larn 'em nothing.' She had succeeded her aunt, who had taught him to read 'right off,' but 'her baint to be compared with she.' And now the farmers' children, and the little aristocracy, including his own grand-children,—all indeed who, in his phrase, 'cared for eddication,'—went to Wattlesea.

CHAPTER XI.

‘THEY FORDYS.’

‘Of honourable reckoning are you both,
And pity ’tis, you lived at odds so long.’

SHAKESPEARE.

MY father had a good deal of business in hand, and was glad of Clarence’s help in writing and accounts, —a great pleasure, though it prevented his being Griff’s companion in his exploring and essays at shooting. He had time, however, to make an expedition with me in the donkey chair to inquire after the herdboy, Amos Bell, and carry him some kitchen physic. To our horror we found him quite alone in the wretched cottage, while everybody was out harvesting; but he did not seem to pity himself, or think it otherwise than quite natural, as he lay on a little bed in the corner, disabled by what Clarence thought a dislocation. Miss Ellen had brought him a pudding, and little Miss Anne a picture-book.

He was not so dense and shy as the children of the hamlet near us, and Emily extracted from him that Miss Ellen was ‘Our passon’s young lady.’

‘Mr. Mears’!’ she exclaimed.

‘No: ourn be Passon Fordy.’

It turned out that this place was not in Earlscombe at all, but in Hillside, a different parish; and the boy, Amos, further communicated that there was old Passon Fordy, and Passon Frank, and Madam, what was Mr. Frank’s lady. Yes, he could read, he could; he went to Sunday School, and was in Miss Ellen’s class; he had been to school worky days, only father was dead, and Farmer Hartop gave him a job.

It was plain that Hillside was under a very different rule from Earlscombe; and Emily was delighted to have discovered that the sweet cottage bonnet’s owner was called Ellen, which just then was the pet Christian name of romance, in honour of the *Lady of the Lake*.

In the midst of her raptures, however, just as we were about to turn in at our own gate into the wood, we heard horses’ hoofs, and then came, careering by on ponies, a very pretty girl and a youth of about the same age. Clarence’s hand rose to his hat, and he made his eager bow; but the young lady did not vouchsafe the slightest acknowledgment, turned her head away, and urged her pony to speed.

Emily broke out with an angry disappointed exclamation. Clarence’s face was scarlet, and he

said low and hoarsely, 'That's Lester. He was in the *Argus* at Portsmouth two years ago;'—and then, as our little sister continued her indignant exclamations, he added, 'Hush! Don't on any account say a word about it. I had better get back to my work. I am only doing you harm by staying here.'

At which Emily shed tears, and together we persuaded him not to curtail his holiday, which, indeed, he could not have done without assigning the reason to the elders, and this was out of the question. Nor did he venture to hang back when, as our service was to be on Sunday afternoon, my father proposed to walk to Hillside Church in the morning. They came back well pleased. There was care and decency throughout. The psalms were sung to a 'grinder organ'—which was an advanced state of things in those days—and very nicely. Parson Frank read well and impressively, and the old parson, a fine venerable man, had preached an excellent sermon—really admirable, as my father repeated. Our party had been scarcely in time, and had been disposed of in seats close to the door, where Clarence was quite out of sight of the disdainful young lady and her squire, of whom Emily begged to hear no more.

She looked askance at the cards left on the hall table the next day—'The Rev. Christopher

Fordyce,' and 'The Rev. F. C. Fordyce,' also 'Mrs. F. C. Fordyce, Hillside Rectory.'

We had found out that Hillside was a family living, and that there was much activity there on the part of the father and son—rector and curate; and that the other clerical folk, ladies especially, who called on us, spoke of Mrs. F. C. Fordyce with a certain tone, as if they were afraid of her, as Sir Horace Lester's sister,—very superior, very active, very strict in her notions,—as if these were so many defects. They were an offshoot of the old Fordyces of Chantry House, but so far back that all recollection of kindred or connection must have worn out. Their property—all in beautiful order—marched with ours, and Chapman was very particular about the boundaries. 'Old master he wouldn't have a bird picked up if it fell over on they Fordys' ground—not he! He couldn't abide passons, couldn't the old Squire—not Miss Hannah More, and all they Cheddar lot, and they Fordys least of all. My son's wife, she was for sending her little maid to Hillside to Madam Fordys' school, but, bless your heart, 'twould have been as much as my place was worth if master had known it.'

The visit was not returned till after Clarence had gone back to his London work. Sore as was the loss of him from my daily life, I could see that the new world and fresh acquaintances were a trial

to him, and especially since the encounter with young Lester had driven him back into his shell, so that he would be better where he was already known and had nothing new to overcome. Emily, though not yet sixteen, was emancipated from schoolroom habits, and the dear girl was my devoted slave to an extent that perhaps I abused.

Not being 'come out,' she was left at home on the day when we set out on a regular progress in the chariot with post-horses. The britshka and pair, which were our ambition, were to wait till my father's next rents came in. Morning calls in the country were a solemn and imposing ceremony, and the head of the family had to be taken on the first circuit; nor was there much scruple as to making them in the forenoon, so several were to be disposed of before fulfilling an engagement to luncheon at the farthest point, where some old London friends had borrowed a house for the summer, and had included me in their invitation.

Here alone did I leave the carriage, but I had Cooper's *Spy* and my sketch-book as companions while waiting at doors where the inhabitants were at home. The last visit was at Hillside Rectory, a house of architecture somewhat similar to our own, but of the soft creamy stone which so well set off the vine with purple clusters, the myrtles and fuchsias, that covered it. I was wishing we

had drawn up far enough off for a sketch to be possible, when, from a window close above, I heard the following words in a clear girlish voice—

‘No, indeed! I’m not going down. It is only those horrid Earlscombe people. I can’t think how they have the face to come near us!’

There was a reply, perhaps that the parents had made the first visit, for the rejoinder was—‘Yes; grandpapa said it was a Christian duty to make an advance; but they need not have come so soon. Indeed, I wonder they show themselves at all. I am sure I would not if I had such a dreadful son.’ Presently, ‘I hate to think of it. That I should have thanked him. Depend upon it, he will never pay the doctor. A coward like that is capable of anything.’

The proverb had been realised, but there could hardly have been a more involuntary or helpless listener. Presently my parents came back, escorted by both the gentlemen of the house, tall fine-looking men, the elder with snowy hair, and the dignity of men of the old school; the younger with a joyous, hearty, out-of-door countenance, more like a squire than a clergyman.

The visit seemed to have been gratifying. Mrs. Fordyce was declared to be of higher stamp than most of the neighbouring ladies; and my father was much pleased with the two clergymen, while

as we drove along he kept on admiring the well-ordered fields and fences, and contrasting the pretty cottages and trim gardens with the dreary appearance of our own village. I asked why Amos Bell's home had been neglected, and was answered with some annoyance, as I pointed down the lane, that it was on our land, though in Hillside parish. 'I am glad to have such neighbours!' observed my mother, and I kept to myself the remarks I had heard, though I was still tingling with the sting of them.

We heard no more of 'they Fordys' for some time. The married pair went away to stay with friends, and we only once met the old gentleman, when I was waiting in the street at Wattlesea in the donkey chair, while my mother was trying to match netting silk in the odd little shop that united fancy work, toys, and tracts with the post office. Old Mr. Fordyce met us as we drew up, handed her out with a grand seigneur's courtesy, and stood talking to me so delightfully that I quite forgot it was from Christian duty.

My father corresponded with the old Rector about the state of the parish, and at last went over to Bath for a personal conference, but without much satisfaction. The Earlscombe people were pronounced to be an ungrateful good-for-nothing set, for whom it was of no use to do anything; and indeed my mother made such discoveries

in the cottages that she durst not let Emily fulfil her cherished scheme of visiting them. The only resemblance to the favourite heroines of religious tales that could be permitted was assembling a tiny Sunday class in Chapman's lodge; and it must be confessed that her brothers thought she made as much fuss about it as if there had been a hundred scholars.

However, between remonstrances and offers of undertaking a share of the expense, my father managed to get Mr. Mears' services dispensed with from the ensuing Lady Day, and that a resident curate should be appointed, the choice of whom was to rest with himself. It was then and there decided that Martyn should be 'brought up to the Church,' as people then used to term destination to Holy Orders. My father said he should feel justified in building a good house when he could afford it, if it was to be a provision for one of his sons, and he also felt that as he had the charge of the parish as patron, it was right and fitting to train one of his sons up to take care of it. Nor did Martyn show any distaste to the idea, as indeed there was less in it then than at present to daunt the imagination of an honest, lively boy, not as yet specially thoughtful or devout, but obedient, truthful, and fairly reverent, and ready to grow as he was trained.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. SOPHIA'S FEUD.

‘ O’er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted.’—HOOD.

WE had a houseful at Christmas. The Rev. Charles Henderson, a Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, lately ordained a deacon, had been recommended to us by our London vicar, and was willing not only to take charge of the parish, but to direct my studies, and to prepare Martyn for school. He came to us for the Christmas vacation to reconnoitre and engage lodgings at a farmhouse. We liked him very much—my mother being all the better satisfied after he had shown her a miniature, and confided to her that the original was waiting till a college living should come to him in the distant future.

Admiral Griffith could not tear himself from his warm rooms and his club, but our antiquarian friend, Mr. Stafford, came with his wife, and revelled

in the ceilings of the mullion room, where he would much have liked to sleep, but that its accommodations were only fit for a bachelor.

Our other visitor was Miss Selby, or rather Mrs. Sophia Selby, as she designated herself, according to the becoming fashion of elderly spinsters, which to my mind might be gracefully resumed. It irked my father to think of the good lady's solitary Christmas at Bath, and he asked her to come to us. She travelled half-way in a post-chaise, and then was met by the carriage. A very nice old lady she was, with a meek, delicate babyish face, which could not be spoilt by the cap of the period, one of the most disfiguring articles of head gear ever devised, though nobody thought so then. She was full of kindness; indeed, if she had a fault it was the abundant pity she lavished on me, and her determination to amuse me. The weather was of the kind that only the healthy and hardy could encounter, and when every one else was gone out, and I was just settling in with a new book, or an old crabbed Latin document, that Mr. Stafford had entrusted to me to copy out fairly and translate, she would glide in with her worsted work on a charitable mission to enliven poor Mr. Edward.

However, this was the means of my obtaining some curious enlightenments. A dinner-party was in contemplation, and she was dismayed at the

choice of the fashionable London hour of seven, and still more by finding that the Fordyces were to be among the guests. She was too well-bred to manifest her feelings to her hosts, but alone with me, she could not refrain from expressing her astonishment to me, all the more when she heard this was reciprocity for an invitation that it had not been possible to accept. Her poor dear uncle would never hear of intercourse with Hillside. On being asked why, she repeated what Chapman had said, that he could not endure any one connected with Mrs. Hannah More and her canting, humbugging set, as the ungodly old man had chosen to call them, imbuing even this good woman with evil prejudices against their noble work at Cheddar.

‘Besides this, Fordyces and Winslows could never be friends, since the Fordyces had taken on themselves to dispute the will, and say it had been improperly obtained.’

‘What will?’

‘Mrs. Winslow’s—Margaret Fordyce that was. She was the heiress, and had every right to dispose of her property.’

‘But that was more than a hundred years ago!’

‘So it was, my dear; but though the law gave it to us—to my uncle’s grandfather (or great-grandfather, was it?)—those Fordyces never could rest content. Why, one of them—a clergyman’s son

too—shot young Philip Winslow dead in a duel. They have always grudged at us. Does your papa know it, my dear Mr. Edward? He ought to be aware.'

'I do not know,' I said; 'but he would hardly care about what happened in the time of Queen Anne.'

It was curious to see how the gentle little lady espoused the family quarrel, which, after all, was none of hers.

'Well, you are London people, and the other branch, and may not feel as we do down here; but I shall always say that Madam Winslow's husband's son had every right to come before her cousin once removed.'

I asked if we were descended from her, for, having a turn for heraldry and genealogy, I wanted to make out our family tree. Mrs. Sophia was ready to hold up her hands at the ignorance of the 'other branch.' This poor heiress had lost all her children in their infancy, and bequeathed the estate to her stepson, the Fordyce male heir having been endowed by her father with the advowson of Hillside and a handsome estate there, which Mrs. Selby thought ought to have contented him, 'but some people never know when they have enough;' and, on my observing that it might have been a matter of justice, she waxed hotter, declaring that what the

Winslows felt so much was the accusation of violence against the poor lady. She spoke as if it were a story of yesterday, and added, 'Indeed, they made the common people have all sorts of superstitious fancies about the room where she died—that old part of the house.' Then she added in a low mysterious voice, 'I hear that your brother Mr. Griffith Winslow could not sleep there;' and when the rats and the wind were mentioned—'Yes, that was what my poor dear uncle used to say. He always called it nonsense; but we never had a servant who would sleep there. You'll not mention it, Mr. Edward, but I could not help asking that very nice housemaid, Jane, whether the room was used, and she said how Mr. Griffith had given it up, and none of the servants could spend a night there when they are sleeping round. Of course I said all in my power to dispel the idea, and told her that there was no accounting for all the noises in old houses; but you never can reason with that class of people.'

'Did you ever hear the noises, Mrs. Selby?'

'Oh, no; I wouldn't sleep there for thousands! Not that I attach any importance to such folly,—my poor dear uncle would never hear of such a thing; but I am such a nervous creature, I should lie awake all night expecting the rats to run over me. I never knew of any one sleeping there, except

in the gay times when I was a child, and the house used to be as full as, or fuller than, it could hold, for the hunt breakfast or a ball, and my poor aunt used to make up ever so many beds in the two rooms, and then we never heard of any disturbance, except what they made themselves.'

This chiefly concerned me, because home cossetting had made me old woman enough to be uneasy about unaired beds; and I knew that my mother meant to consign Clarence to the mullion chamber. So, without betraying Jane, I spoke to her, and was answered, 'Oh, sir, I'll take care of that; I'll light a fire and air the mattresses well. I wish that was all, poor young gentleman!'

To the reply that the rats were slaughtered and the wind stopped out, Jane returned a look of compassion; but the subject was dropped, as it was supposed to be the right thing to hush up, instead of fostering, any popular superstition; but it surprised me that, as all our servants were fresh importations, they should so soon have become imbued with these undefined alarms.

My father was much amused at being successor to this family feud, and said that when he had time he would look up the documents.

Mrs. Sophia was a sight when Mr. Fordyce and his son and daughter-in-law were announced; she was so comically stiff between her deference to her

hosts and her allegiance to her poor dear uncle ; but her coldness melted before the charms of old Mr. Fordyce, who was one of the most delightful people in the world. She even was his partner at whist, and won the game, and that she *did* like.

Parson Frank, as we naughty young ones called him, was all good-nature and geniality—a thorough clergyman after the ideas of the time, and a thorough farmer too ; and in each capacity, as well as in politics, he suited my father or Mr. Henderson. His lady, in a blonde cap, exactly like the last equipment my mother had provided herself with in London, and a black satin dress, had much more style than the more gaily-dressed country dames, and far more conversation. Mr. Stafford, who had dreaded the party, pronounced her a sensible, agreeable woman, and she was particularly kind and pleasant to me, coming and talking over the botany of the country, and then speaking of my brother's kindness to poor Amos Bell, who was nearly recovered, but was a weakly child, for whom she dreaded the toil of a ploughboy in thick clay with heavy shoes.

I was sorry when, after Emily's well-studied performance on the piano, Mrs. Fordyce was summoned away from me to sing, but her music and her voice were both of a very different order from ordinary drawing-room music ; and when our evening was

over, we congratulated ourselves upon our neighbours, and agreed that the Fordyces were the gems of the party.

Only Mrs. Sophia sighed at us as degenerate Winslows, and Emily reserved to herself the right of believing that the daughter was 'a horrid girl.'

CHAPTER XIII.

A SCRAPE.

‘ Though bound with weakness’ heavy chain,
We in the dust of earth remain ;
Not all remorseful be our tears,
No agony of shame or fears,
Need pierce its passion’s bitter tide.’

Verses and Sonnets.

PERHAPS it was of set purpose that our dinner-party had been given before Clarence’s return. Griffith had been expected in time for it, but he had preferred going by way of London to attend a ball given by the daughter of a barrister friend of my father’s. Selina Clarkson was a fine showy girl, with the sort of beauty to inspire boyish admiration, and Griff’s had been a standing family joke, even my father condescending to tease him when the young lady married Sir Henry Peacock, a fat vulgar old man who had made his fortune in the commissariat, and purchased a baronetcy. He was allowing his young wife her full swing of fashion and enjoyment. My mother did not think it a desirable acquaintance, and was restless until both the brothers

came home together, long after dark on Christmas Eve, having been met by the gig at the corner where the coach stopped. The dinner-hour had been put off till half-past six, and we had to wait for them, the coach having been delayed by setting down Christmas guests and Christmas fare. They were a contrast; Griffith looking very handsome and manly, all in a ruddy glow from the frosty air, and Clarence, though equally tall, well-made, and with more refined features, looked pale and effaced, now that his sailor tan was worn off. The one talked as eagerly as he ate, the other was shy, spiritless, and with little appetite; but as he always shrank into himself among strangers, it was the less wonder that he sat in his drooping way behind my sofa, while Griffith kept us all merry with his account of the humours of the 'Peacock at home;' the lumbering efforts of old Sir Henry to be as young and gay as his wife, in spite of gout and portliness; and the extreme delight of his lady in her new splendours—a gold spotted muslin and white plumes in a diamond agraffe. He mimicked Sir Henry's cockneyisms more than my father's chivalry approved towards his recent host, as he described the complaints he had heard against 'my Lady being refused the hentry at Halmack's, but treated like the very canal;' and how the devoted husband 'wowed he would get up a still more hexclusive circle, and

shut hout these himpertinent fashionables who regarded Halmack's as the seventh 'eaven.'

My mother shook her head at his audacious fun about Paradise and the Peri, but he was so brilliant and good-humoured that no one was ever long displeased with him. At night he followed when Clarence helped me to my room, and carefully shutting the door, Griff began, 'Now, Teddy, you're always as rich as a Jew, and I told Bill you'd help him to set it straight. I'd do it myself, but that I'm cleaned out. I'd give ten times the cash rather than see him with that hang-dog look again for just nothing at all, if he would only believe so and be rational.'

Clarence did look indescribably miserable while it was explained that he had been commissioned to receive about £20 which was owing to my father, and to discharge therewith some small debts to London tradesmen. All except the last, for a little more than four pounds, had been paid, when Clarence met in the street an old messmate, a good-natured rattle-pated youth,—one of those who had thought him harshly treated. There was a cordial greeting, and an invitation to dine at once at a hotel, where they were joined by some other young men, and by and by betook themselves to cards, when my poor brother's besetting enemy prevented him from withdrawing when he found the points were guineas.

Thus he lost the remaining amount in his charge, and so much of his own that barely enough was left for his journey. His salary was not due till Lady Day; Mr. Castleford was in the country, and no advances could be asked from Mr. Frith. Thus Griff had found him in utter despair, and had ever since been trying to cheer him and make light of his trouble. If I advanced the amount, which was no serious matter to me, Clarence could easily get Peter to pay the bill, and if my father should demand the receipt too soon, it would be easy to put him off by saying there had been a delay in getting the account sent in.

‘I couldn’t do that,’ said Clarence.

‘Well, I should not have thought *you* would have stuck at that,’ returned Griff.

‘There must be no untruth,’ I broke in; ‘but if, without *that*, he can avoid getting into a scrape with papa——’

Clarence interrupted in the wavering voice we knew so well, but growing clearer and stronger. ‘Thank you, Edward, but—but—no, I can’t. There’s the Sacrament to-morrow.’

‘Oh—h!’ said Griff, in an indescribable tone. ‘But he will never believe you, nor let you go.’

‘Better so,’ said Clarence, half choked, ‘than go profanely—deceiving—or not knowing whether I shall——’

Just then we heard our father wishing the other gentlemen good-night, and to our surprise Clarence opened the door, though he was deadly white and with dew starting on his forehead.

My father turned good-naturedly. ‘Boys, boys, you are glad to be together, but mamma won’t have you talking here all night, keeping her baby up.’

‘Sir,’ said Clarence, holding by the rail of the bed, ‘I was waiting for you. I have something to tell you.’

The words that followed were incoherent and wrong end foremost; nor had many, indeed, been uttered before my father cut them short with—

‘No false excuses, sir; I know you too well to listen. Go. I have ceased to hope for anything better.’

Clarence went without a word, but Griff and I burst out with entreaties to be listened to. Our father thought at first that ours were only the pleadings of partiality, and endeavours to shield the brother we both so heartily loved; but when he understood the circumstances, the real amount of the transgression, and Clarence’s rejection of our united advice and assistance to conceal it, he was greatly touched and softened. ‘Poor lad! poor fellow!’ he muttered, ‘he is really doing his best. I need not have cut him so short. I was afraid of more falsehoods if I let him open his mouth. I’ll go and see.’

He went off, and we remained in suspense, Griff observing that he had done his best, but poor Bill always would be a fool, and that no one who had not always lived at home like me would have let out that we had been for the suppression policy. As I was rather shocked, he went off to bed, saying he should look in to see what remained of Clarence after the pelting of the pitiless storm he was sure to bring on himself by his ridiculous faltering instead of speaking out like a man.

I longed to have been able to do the same, but my father kindly came back to relieve my mind by telling me that he was better satisfied about Clarence than ever he had been before. When encouraged to speak out, the narrative of the temptation had so entirely agreed with what we had said as to show there had been no prevarication, and this had done more to convince my father that he was on the right track than the having found him on his knees. He had had a patient hearing, and thus was able to command his nerves enough to explain himself, and it had ended in my father giving entire forgiveness for what, as Griff truly said, would have been a mere trifle but for the past. The voluntary confession had much impressed my father, and he could not help adding a word of gentle reproof to me for having joined in aiding him to withhold it, but he accepted my explanation and went away, observing,

‘By the by, I don’t wonder at what Griffith says of that room; I never heard such strange effects of currents of air.’

Clarence was in my room before I was drest, full of our father’s ‘wonderful goodness’ to him. He had never experienced anything like it, he said. ‘Why! he really seemed hopeful about me,’ were words uttered with a gladness enough to go to one’s heart. ‘O Edward, I feel as if there was some chance of “steadfastly purposing” this time.’

It was not the way of the family to say much of religious feeling, and this was much for Clarence to utter. He looked white and tired, but there was an air of rest and peace about him, above all when my mother met him with a very real kiss. Moreover, Mr. Castleford had taken care to brighten our Christmas with a letter expressive of great satisfaction with Clarence for steadiness and intelligence. Even Mr. Frith allowed that he was the most punctual of all those young dogs.

‘I do believe,’ said my father, ‘that his piety is doing him some good after all.’

So our mutual wishes of a happy Christmas were verified, though not much according to the notions of this half of the century. People made their Christmas day either mere merriment, or something little different from the grave Sunday of that date. And ours, except for the Admiral’s dining with

us, had always been of the latter description, all the more that when celebrations of the Holy Communion were so rare they were treated with an awe and reverence which frequency has perhaps diminished, and a feeling (possibly Puritanical) prevailed which made it appear incongruous to end with festivity a day so begun. That we had a Christmas Day Communion at all at Earlscombe was an innovation only achieved by Mr. Henderson going to assist the old Rector at Wattlesea; and there were no communicants except from our house, besides Chapman, his daughter-in-law, and five old creatures between whom the alms were immediately divided. We afterwards learnt that our best farmer and his wife were much disappointed at the change from Sunday interfering with the family jollification; and Mrs. Sophia Selby was annoyed at the contradiction to her habits under the rule of her poor dear uncle.

Of the irregularities, irreverences, and squalor of the whole I will not speak. They were not then such stumbling-blocks as they would be now, and many passed unperceived by us, buried as we were in our big pew, with our eyes riveted on our books; yet even thus there was enough evident to make my mother rejoice that Mr. Henderson would be with us before Easter. Still this could not mar the thankful gladness that was with us all

that day, and which shone in Clarence's eyes. His countenance always had a remarkable expression in church, as if somehow his spirit went farther than ours did, and things unseen were more real to him.

Hillside, as usual, had two services, and my father and his friend were going to walk thither in the afternoon, but it was a raw cold day, threatening snow, and Emily was caught by my mother in the hall and ordered back, as well as Clarence, who had shown symptoms of having caught cold on his dismal journey. Emily coaxed from her permission to have a fire in the bookroom, and there we three had a memorably happy time. We read our psalms and lessons, and our *Christian Year*, which was more and more the lodestar of our feelings. We compared our favourite passages, and discussed the obscurer ones, and Clarence was led to talk out more of his heart than he had ever shown to us before. Perhaps he had lost some of his reserve through his intercourse with our good old governess, Miss Newton, who was still grinding away at her daily mill, though with somewhat failing eyesight, so that she could do nothing but knit in the long evenings, and was most grateful to her former pupil for coming, as often as he could, to talk or read to her.

She was a most excellent and devout woman, and when Emily, who in youthful *gaieté de cœur*

had got a little tired of her, exclaimed at his taste, and asked if she made him read nothing but Pike's *Early Piety*, he replied gravely, 'She showed me where to lay my burthen down,' and turned to the two last verses of the poem for 'Good Friday' in the *Christian Year*, as well as to the one we had just read on the Holy Communion.

My father's kindness had seemed to him the pledge of the Heavenly Father's forgiveness; and he added, perhaps a little childishly, that it had been his impulse to promise never to touch a card again, but that he dreaded the only too familiar reply, 'What availed his promises?'

'Do promise, Clarry!' cried Emily, 'and then you won't have to play with that tiresome old Mrs. Sophia.'

'That would rather deter me,' said Clarence good-humouredly.

'A card-playing old age is despicable,' pronounced Miss Emily, much to our amusement.

After that we got into a bewilderment. We knew nothing of the future question of temperance *versus* total abstinence; but after it had been extracted that Miss Newton regarded cards as the devil's books, the inconsistent little sister changed sides, and declared it narrow and evangelical to renounce what was innocent. Clarence argued that what might be harmless for others might be dangerous

for such as himself, and that his real difficulty in making even a mental vow was that, if broken, there was an additional sin.

‘It is not oneself that one trusts,’ I said.

‘No,’ said Clarence emphatically; ‘and setting up a vow seems as if it might be sticking up the reed of one’s own word, and leaning on *that*—when it breaks, at least mine does. If I could always get the grasp of Him that I felt to-day, there would be no more bewildered heart and failing spirit, which are worse than the actual falls they cause.’ And as Emily said she did not understand, he replied in words I wrote down and thought over, ‘What we *are* is the point, more than even what we *do*. We *do* as we *are*; and yet we form ourselves by what we *do*.’

‘And,’ I put in, ‘I know somebody who won a victory last night over himself and his two brothers. Surely *doing* that is a sign that he *is* more than he used to be.’

‘If he were, it would not have been an effort at all,’ said Clarence, but with his rare sweet smile.

Just then Griff called him away, and Emily sat pondering and impressed. ‘It did seem so odd,’ she said, ‘that Clarry should be so much the best, and yet so much the worst of us.’

I agreed. His insight into spiritual things, and his enjoyment of them, always humiliated us both,

yet he fell so much lower in practice,—‘But then we had not his temptations.’

‘Yes,’ said Emily; ‘but look at Griff! He goes about like other young men, and keeps all right, and yet he doesn’t care about religious things a bit more than he can help.’

It was quite true. Religion was life to the one and an insurance to the other, and this had been a mystery to us all our young lives, as far as we had ever reflected on the contrast between the practical failure and success of each. Our mother, on the other hand, viewed Clarence’s tendencies as part of an unreal, self-deceptive nature, and regretted his intimacy with Miss Newton, who, she said, had fostered ‘that kind of thing’ in his childhood—made him fancy talk, feeling, and preaching were more than truth and honour—and might lead him to run after Irving, Rowland Hill, or Baptist Noel, about whose tenets she was rather confused. It would be an additional misfortune if he became a fanatical Evangelical light, and he was just the character to be worked upon.

My father held that she might be thankful for any good influence or safe resort for a young man in lodgings in London, and he merely bade Clarence never resort to any variety of dissenting preacher. We were of the school called—a little later—high and dry, but were strictly orthodox according to our

lights, and held it a prime duty to attend our parish church, whatever it might be ; nor, indeed, had Clarence swerved from these traditions.

Poor Mrs. Sophia was balked of the game at whist, which she viewed as a legitimate part of the Christmas pleasures ; and after we had eaten our turkey, we found the evening long, except that Martyn escaped to snapdragon with the servants ; and, by and by, Chapman, magnificent in patronage, ushered in the church singers into the hall, and clarionet, bassoon, and fiddle astonished our ears.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MULLION CHAMBER.

‘A lady with a lamp I see,
Pass through the glimmering gloom,
And flit from room to room.’

LONGFELLOW.

FOR want of being able to take exercise, the first part of the night had always been sleepless with me, though my dear mother thought it wrong to recognise the habit or allow me a lamp. A fire, however, I had, and by its light, on the second night after Christmas, I saw my door noiselessly opened, and Clarence creeping in half-dressed and barefooted. To my frightened interrogation the answer came, through chattering teeth, ‘It’s I—only I—Ted—no—nothing’s the matter, only I can’t stand it any longer!’

His hands were cold as ice when he grasped mine, as if to get hold of something substantial, and he trembled so as to shake the bed. ‘That room,’ he faltered. ‘’Tis not only the moans! I’ve seen her!’

‘Whom?’

‘I don’t know. There she stands with her lamp, crying!’ I could scarcely distinguish the words through the clashing of his teeth, and as I threw my arms round him the shudder seemed to pass to me; but I did my best to warm him by drawing the clothes over him, and he began to gather himself together, and speak intelligibly. There had been sounds the first night as of wailing, but he had been too much preoccupied to attend to them till, soon after one o’clock, they ended in a heavy fall and long shriek, after which all was still. Christmas night had been undisturbed, but on this the voices had begun again at eleven, and had a strangely human sound; but as it was windy, sleety weather, and he had learnt at sea to disregard noises in the rigging, he drew the sheet over his head and went to sleep. ‘I was dreaming that I was at sea,’ he said, ‘as I always do on a noisy night, but this was not a dream. I was wakened by a light in the room, and there stood a woman with a lamp, moaning and sobbing. My first notion was that one of the maids had come to call me, and I sat up; but I could not speak, and she gave another awful suppressed cry, and moved towards that walled-up door. Then I saw it was none of the servants, for it was an antique dress like an old picture. So I knew what it must be, and an unbearable horror

came over me, and I rushed into the outer room, where there was a little fire left; but I heard her going on still, and I could endure it no longer. I knew you would be awake and would bear with me, so I came down to you.'

Then this was what Chapman and the maids had meant. This was Mrs. Sophia Selby's vulgar superstition! I found that Clarence had heard none of the mysterious whispers afloat, and only knew that Griff had deserted the room after his own return to London. I related what I had learnt from the old lady, and in that midnight hour we agreed that it could be no mere fancy or rumour, but that cruel wrong must have been done in that chamber. Our feeling was that all ought to be made known, and in that impression we fell asleep, Clarence first.

By and by I found him moving. He had heard the clock strike four, and thought it wiser to repair to his own quarters, where he believed the disturbance was over. Lucifer matches as yet were not, but he had always been a noiseless being, with a sailor's foot, so that, by the help of the moonlight through the hall windows, he regained his room.

And when morning had come, the nocturnal visitation wore such a different aspect to both our minds that we decided to say nothing to our parents, who, said Clarence, would simply disbelieve him; and, indeed, I inclined to suppose it had been an

uncommonly vivid dream, produced in that sensitive nature by the uncanny sounds of the wind in the chinks and crannies of the ancient chamber. Had not Scott's *Demonology and Witchcraft*, which we studied hard on that day, proved all such phantoms to be explicable? The only person we told was Griff, who was amused and incredulous. He had heard the noises—oh yes! and objected to having his sleep broken by them. It was too bad to expose Clarence to them—poor Bill—on whom they worked such fancies!

He interrogated Chapman, however, but probably in that bantering way which is apt to produce reserve. Chapman never 'gave heed to them fictitious tales,' he said; but, when hard pressed, he allowed that he had 'heerd that a lady do walk o' winter nights,' and that was why the garden door of the old rooms was walled up. Griff asked if this was done for fear she should catch cold, and this somewhat affronted him, so that he averred that he knew nought about it, and gave no thought to such like.

Just then they arrived at the Winslow Arms, and took each a glass of ale, when Griff, partly to tease Chapman, asked the landlady—an old Chantry House servant—whether she had ever met the ghost. She turned rather pale, which seemed to have impressed him, and demanded if he had seen it. 'It

always walked at Christmas time—between then and the New Year.’ She had once seen a light in the garden by the ruin in winter-time, and once last spring it came along the passage, but that was just before the old Squire was took for death,—folks said that was always the way before any of the family died—‘if you’ll excuse it, sir.’ Oh no, she thought nothing of such things, but she had heard tell that the noises were such at all times of the year that no one could sleep in the rooms, but the light wasn’t to be seen except at Christmas.

Griff, with the philosophy of a university man, was certain that all was explained by Clarence having imbibed the impression of the place being haunted; and going to sleep nervous at the noises, his brain had shaped a phantom in accordance. Let Clarence declare as he might that the legends were new to him, Griff only smiled to think how easily people forgot, and he talked earnestly about catching ideas without conscious information.

However, he volunteered to sit up that night to ascertain the exact causes of the strange noises and convince Clarence that they were nothing but the effects of draughts. The fire in his gunroom was surreptitiously kept up to serve for the vigil, which I ardently desired to share. It was an enterprise; it would gratify my curiosity; and besides, though Griffith was good-natured and forbearing in a general

way towards Clarence, I detected a spirit of mockery about him which might break out unpleasantly when poor Clarry was convicted of one of his unreasonable panics.

Both brothers were willing to gratify me, the only difficulty being that the tap of my crutches would warn the entire household of the expedition. However, they had—all unknown to my mother—several times carried me about queen's cushion fashion, as, being always much of a size, they could do most handily; and as both were now fine, strong, well-made youths of twenty and nineteen, they had no doubt of easily and silently conveying me up the shallow-stepped staircase when all was quiet for the night.

Emily, with her sharp ears, guessed that something was in hand, but we promised her that she should know all in time. I believe Griff, being a little afraid of her quickness, led her to suppose he was going to hold what he called a symposium in his rooms, and to think it a mystery of college life not intended for young ladies.

He really had prepared a sort of supper for us when, after my father's resounding turn of the key of the drawing-room door, my brothers, in their stocking soles, bore me upstairs, the fun of the achievement for the moment overpowering all sense of eeriness. Griff said he could not receive me in his apartment with-

out doing honour to the occasion, and that Dutch courage was requisite for us both ; but I suspect it was more in accordance with Oxford habits that he had provided a bottle of sherry and another of ale, some brandy cherries, bread, cheese, and biscuits, by what means I do not know, for my mother always locked up the wine. He was disappointed that Clarence would touch nothing, and declared that inanition was the preparation for ghost-seeing or imagining. I drank his health in a glass of sherry as I looked round at the curious old room, with its panelled roof, the heraldic devices and badges of the Power family, and the trophy of swords, dirks, daggers, and pistols, chiefly relics of our naval grandfather, but reinforced by the sword, helmet, and spurs of the county Yeomanry which Griff had joined.

Griff proposed cards to drive away fancies, especially as the sounds were beginning ; but though we generally yielded to him we *could* not give our attention to anything but these. There was first a low moan. ‘No great harm in that,’ said Griff ; ‘it comes through that crack in the wainscot where there is a sham window. Some putty will put a stop to that.’

Then came a more decided wail and sob much nearer to us. Griff hastily swallowed the ale in his tumbler, and, striking a theatrical attitude, exclaimed, ‘Angels and ministers of grace defend us !’

Clarence held up his hand in deprecation. The door into his bedroom was open, and Griff, taking up one of the flat candlesticks, pursued his researches, holding the flame to all chinks or cracks in the wainscoting to detect draughts which might cause the dreary sounds, which were much more like suppressed weeping than any senseless gust of wind. Of draughts there were many, and he tried holding his hand against each crevice to endeavour to silence the wails; but these became more human and more distressful. Presently Clarence exclaimed, 'There!' and on his face there was a whiteness and an expression which always recurs to me on reading those words of Eliphaz the Temanite, 'Then a spirit passed before my face, and the hair of my flesh stood up.' Even Griff was awestruck as we cried, 'Where? what?'

'Don't you see her? There! By the press—look!'

'I see a patch of moonlight on the wall,' said Griff.

'Moonlight—her lamp. Edward, don't you see her?'

I could see nothing but a spot of light on the wall. Griff (plainly putting a force on himself) came back and gave him a good-natured shake. 'Dreaming again, old Bill. Wake up and come to your senses.'

‘I am as much in my senses as you are,’ said Clarence. ‘I see her as plainly as I see you.’

Nor could any one doubt either the reality of the awe in his voice and countenance, nor of the light—a kind of hazy ball—nor of the choking sobs.

‘What is she like?’ I asked, holding his hand, for, though infected by his dread, my fears were chiefly for the effect on him; but he was much calmer and less horror-struck than on the previous night, though still he shuddered as he answered in a low voice, as if loth to describe a lady in her presence, ‘A dark cloak with the hood fallen back, a kind of lace headdress loosely fastened, brown hair, thin white face, eyes—oh, poor thing!—staring with fright, dark—oh, how swollen the lids! all red below with crying—black dress with white about it—a widow kind of look—a glove on the arm with the lamp. Is she beckoning—looking at us? Oh, you poor thing, if I could tell what you mean!’

I felt the motion of his muscles in act to rise, and grasped him. Griff held him with a strong hand, hoarsely crying, ‘Don’t!—don’t!—don’t follow the thing, whatever you do!’

Clarence hid his face. It was very awful and strange. Once the thought of conjuring her to speak by the Holy Name crossed me, but then I saw no figure; and with incredulous Griffith standing by, it would have been like playing,

nor perhaps could I have spoken. How long this lasted there is no knowing; but presently the light moved towards the walled-up door and seemed to pass into it. Clarence raised his head and said she was gone. We breathed freely.

‘The farce is over,’ said Griff. ‘Mr. Edward Winslow’s carriage stops the way!’

I was hoisted up, candle in hand, between the two, and had nearly reached the stairs when there came up on the garden side a sound as of tipsy revellers in the garden. ‘The scoundrels! how can they have got in?’ cried Griff, looking towards the window; but all the windows on that side had peculiarly heavy shutters and bars, with only a tiny heart-shaped aperture very high up, so they somewhat hurried their steps downstairs, intending to rush out on the intruders from the back door. But suddenly, in the middle of the staircase, we heard a terrible heartrending woman’s shriek, making us all start and have a general fall. My brothers managed to seat me safely on a step without much damage to themselves, but the candle fell and was extinguished, and we made too heavy a weight to fall without real noise enough to bring the household together before we could pick ourselves up in the dark.

We heard doors opening and hurried calls, and something about pistols, impelling Griff to call out,

‘It’s nothing, papa; but there are some drunken rascals in the garden.’

A light had come by this time, and we were detected. There was a general sally upon the enemy in the garden before any one thought of me, except a ‘You here!’ when they nearly fell over me. And there I was left sitting on the stair, helpless without my crutches, till in a few minutes all returned declaring there was nothing—no signs of anything; and then as Clarence ran up to me with my crutches my father demanded the meaning of my being there at that time of night.

‘Well, sir,’ said Griff, ‘it is only that we have been sitting up to investigate the ghost.’

‘Ghost! Arrant stuff and nonsense! What induced you to be dragging Edward about in this dangerous way?’

‘I wished it,’ said I.

‘You are all mad together, I think. I won’t have the house disturbed for this ridiculous folly. I shall look into it to-morrow!’

CHAPTER XV.

RATIONAL THEORIES.

‘ These are the reasons, they are natural.’

Julius Cæsar.

IF anything could have made our adventure more unpleasant to Mr. and Mrs. Winslow, it would have been the presence of guests. However, inquiry was suppressed at breakfast, in deference to the signs my mother made to enjoin silence before the children, all unaware that Emily was nearly frantic with suppressed curiosity, and Martyn knew more about the popular version of the legend than any of us.

Clarence looked wan and heavy-eyed. His head was aching from a bump against the edge of a step, and his cold was much worse; no wonder, said my mother; but she was always softened by any ailment, and feared that the phantoms were the effect of coming illness. I have always thought that if Clarence could have come home from his court-martial with a brain fever he would have earned

immediate forgiveness; but unluckily for him, he was a very healthy person.

All three of us were summoned to the tribunal in the study, where my father and my mother sat in judgment on what they termed 'this preposterous business.' In our morning senses our impressions were much more vague than at midnight, and we betrayed some confusion; but Griff and I had a strong instinct of sheltering Clarence, and we stoutly declared the noises to be beyond the capacities of wind, rats, or cats; that the light was visible and inexplicable; and that though we had seen nothing else, we could not doubt that Clarence did.

'Thought he did,' corrected my father.

'Without discussing the word,' said Griff, 'I mean that the effect on his senses was the same as the actual sight. You could not look at him without being certain.'

'Exactly so,' returned my mother. 'I wish Dr. Fellowes were near.'

Indeed nothing saved Clarence from being consigned to medical treatment but the distance from Bath or Bristol, and the contradictory advice that had been received from our county neighbours as to our family doctor. However, she formed her theory that his nervous imaginings—whether involuntary or acted, she hoped the former, and wished she could be sure—had infected us; and, as she was really

uneasy about him, she would not let him sleep in the mullion room, but having nowhere else to bestow him, she turned out the man-servant and put him into the little room beyond mine, and she also forbade any mention of the subject to him that day.

This was a sore prohibition to Emily, who had been discussing it with the other ladies, and was in a mingled state of elation at the romance, and terror at the supernatural, which found vent in excited giggle, and moved Griff to cram her with raw-head and bloody-bone horrors, conventional enough to be suspicious, and send her to me tearfully to entreat to know the truth. If by day she exulted in a haunted chamber, in the evening she paid for it by terrors at walking about the house alone, and, when sent on an errand by my mother, looked piteous enough to be laughed at or scolded on all sides.

The gentlemen had more serious colloquies, and the upshot was a determination to sit up together and discover the origin of the annoyance. Mr. Stafford's antiquarian researches had made him familiar with such mysteries, and enough of them had been explained by natural causes to convince him that there was a key to all the rest. Owls, coiners, and smugglers had all been convicted of simulating ghosts. In one venerable mansion, behind the wainscot, there had been discovered nine skeletons of cats in different stages of decay, having

trapped themselves at various intervals of time, and during the gradual extinction of their eighty-one lives having emitted cries enough to establish the ghastly reputation of the place. Perhaps Mr. Henderson was inclined to believe there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in even an antiquary's philosophy. He owned himself perplexed, but reserved his opinion.

At breakfast Clarence was quite well, except for the remains of his sore throat, and the two seniors were gruff and brief as to their watch. They had heard odd noises, and should discover the cause; the carpenter had already been sent for, and they had seen a light which was certainly due to reflection or refraction. Mr. Henderson committed himself to nothing but that 'it was very extraordinary;' and there was a wicked look of diversion on Griff's face, and an exchange of glances. Afterwards, in our own domain, we extracted a good deal more from them.

Griff told us how the two elders started on politics, and denounced Brougham and O'Connell loud enough to terrify any save the most undaunted ghost, till Henderson said 'Hush!' and they paused at the moan with which the performance always commenced, making Mr. Stafford turn, as Griff said, 'white in the gills,' though he talked of the wind on the stillest of frosty nights. Then came the sobbing and wailing, which certainly overawed them

all; Henderson called them 'agonising,' but Griff was in a manner inured to this, and felt as if master of the ceremonies. Let them say what they would by daylight about owls, cats, and rats, they owned the human element then, and were far from comfortable, though they would not compromise their good sense by owning what both their younger companions had perceived—their feeling of some undefinable presence. Vain attempts had been made to account for the light or get rid of it by changing the position of candles or bright objects in the outer room; and Henderson had shut himself into the bedroom with it; but there he still only saw the hazy light—though all was otherwise pitch dark, except the keyhole and the small gray patch of sky at the top of the window-shutters. 'You saw nothing else?' said Griff. 'I thought I heard you break out as Clarence did, just before my father opened the door.'

'Perhaps I did so. I had the sense strongly on me of some being in grievous distress very near me.'

'And you should have power over it,' suggested Emily.

'I am afraid,' he said, 'that more thorough conviction and comprehension are needed before I could address the thing with authority. I should like to have stayed longer and heard the conclusion.'

For Mr. Stafford had grown impatient and weary,

and my father having satisfied himself that there was something to be detected, would not remain to the end, and not only carried his companions off, but locked the doors, perhaps expecting to imprison some agent in a trick, and find him in the morning. Indeed Clarence had a dim remembrance of having been half wakened by some one looking in on him in the night, when he was sleeping heavily after his cold and the previous night's disturbance, and we suspected, though we would not say, that our father might have wished to ascertain that he had no share in producing these appearances. He was, however, fully acquitted of all wilful deception in the case, and he was not surprised, though he was disappointed, that his vision of the lady was supposed to be the consequence of excited imagination.

‘I can’t help it,’ he said to me in private. ‘I have always seen or felt, or whatever you may call it, things that others do not. Don’t you remember how nobody would believe that I saw Lucy Brooke?’

‘That was in the beginning of the measles.’

‘I know; and I will tell you something curious. When I was at Gibraltar I met Mrs. Emmott——’

‘Mary Brooke?’

‘Yes; I spent a very happy Sunday with her. We talked over old times, and she told me that Lucy had all through her illness been very uneasy about having promised to bring me a macaw’s

feather the next time we played in the Square gardens. It could not be sent to me for fear of carrying the infection, but the dear girl was too light-headed to understand, and kept on fretting and wandering about breaking her word. I have no doubt the wish carried her spirit to me the moment it was free,' he added, with tears springing to his eyes. He also said that before the court-martial he had, night after night, dreams of sinking and drowning in huge waves, and his friend Coles struggling to come to his aid, but being forcibly withheld; and he had since learnt that Coles had actually endeavoured to come from Plymouth to bear testimony to his previous character, but had been refused leave, and told that he could do no good.

There had been other instances of perception of a presence and of a prescient foreboding. 'It is like a sixth sense,' he said, 'and a very uncomfortable one. I would give much to be rid of it, for it is connected with all that is worst in my life. I had it before Navarino, when no one expected an engagement. It made me believe I should be killed, and drove me to what was much worse—or at least I used to think so.'

'Don't you now?' I asked.

'No,' said Clarence. 'It was a great mercy that I did not die then. There's something to conquer first. But you'll never speak of this, Ted. I have

left off telling of such things—it only gives another reason for disbelieving me.’

However, this time his veracity was not called in question,—but he was supposed to be under a hallucination, the creation of the noises acting on his imagination and memory of the persecuted widow, which must have been somewhere dormant in his mind, though he averred that he had never heard of it. It had now, however, made a strong impression on him; he was convinced that some crime or injustice had been perpetrated, and thought it ought to be investigated; but Griffith made us laugh at his championship of this shadow of a shade, and even wrote some mock heroic verses about it,—nor would it have been easy to stir my father to seek for the motives of an apparition which no one in the family save Clarence professed to have seen.

The noises were indisputable, but my mother began to suspect a cause for them. To oblige a former cook we had brought down with us as stable-boy her son, George Sims, an imp accustomed to be the pet and jester of a mews. Martyn was only too fond of his company, and he made no secret of his contempt for the insufferable dulness of the country, enlivening it by various acts of monkey-mischief, in some of which Martyn had been implicated. That very afternoon, as Mrs. Sophia Selby was walking home in the twilight from Chapman’s

lodge, in company with Mr. Henderson, an eldritch yell proceeding from the vaults beneath the mullion chambers nearly frightened her into fits. Henderson darted in and captured the two boys in the fact. Martyn's asseveration that he had taken the pair for Griff and Emily would have pacified the good-natured clergyman, but Mrs. Sophia was too much agitated, or too spiteful, as we declared, not to make a scene.

Martyn spent the evening alone and in disgrace, and only his unimpeachable character for truth caused the acceptance of his affirmation that the yell was an impromptu fraternal compliment, and that he had nothing to do with the noises in the mullion chamber. He had been supposed to be perfectly unconscious of anything of the kind, and to have never so much as heard of a phantom, so my mother was taken somewhat aback when, in reply to her demand whether he had ever been so naughty as to assist George in making a noise in Clarence's room, he said, 'Why, that's the ghost of the lady that was murdered atop of the steps, and always walks every Christmas!'

'Who told you such ridiculous nonsense?'

The answer 'George' was deemed conclusive that all had been got up by that youth; and there was considerable evidence of his talent for ventriloquism and taste for practical jokes. My mother was certain that, having heard of the popular superstition, he

had acted ghost. She appealed to *Woodstock* to prove the practicability of such feats; and her absolute conviction persuaded the maids (who had given warning *en masse*) that the enemy was exorcised when George Sims had been sent off on the Royal Mail under Clarence's guardianship.

None of the junior part of the family believed him guilty, but he had hunted the cows round the paddock, mounted on my donkey, had nearly shot the kitchen-maid with Griff's gun, and, if not much maligned, knew the way to the apple-chamber only too well,—so that he richly deserved his doom, rejoiced in it himself, and was unregretted save by Martyn. Clarence viewed him in the light of a victim, and tried to keep an eye on him, but he developed his talent as a ventriloquist, made his fortune, and retired on a public-house.

My mother would fain have had the vaults under the mullion rooms bricked up, but Mr. Stafford cried out on the barbarism of such a proceeding. The mystery was declared to be solved, and was added to Mr. Stafford's good stories of haunted houses.

And at home my father forbade any further mention of such rank folly and deception. The inner mullion chamber was turned into a lumber-room, and as weeks passed by without hearing or seeing any more of lady or of lamp, we began to credit the wonderful freaks of the goblin page.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAT LANGUAGE.

‘ Soon as she parted thence—the fearful twayne,
That blind old woman and her daughter deare,
Came forth, and finding Kirkrapine there slayne,
For anguish greate they gan to rend their heare
And beate their breasts, and naked flesh to teare ;
And when they both had wept and wayled their fill,
Then forth they ran, like two amazed deere,
Half mad through malice and revenging will,
To follow her that was the causer of their ill.’—SPENSER.

THE Christmas vacation was not without another breeze about Griffith’s expenses at Oxford. He held his head high, and declared that people expected something from the eldest son of a man of property, and my father tried to convince him that a landed estate often left less cash available than did the fixed salary of an office. Griff treated all in his light, good-humoured way, promised to be careful, and came to me to commiserate the poor old gentleman’s ignorance of the ways of the new generation.

There ensued some trying weeks of dark days, raw frost, and black east wind, when the home

party cast longing, lingering recollections back to the social intercourse, lamp-lit streets, and ready interchange of books and other amenities we had left behind us. We were not accustomed to have our nearest neighbours separated from us by two miles of dirty lane, or road mended with excruciating stones, nor were they very congenial when we did see them. The Fordyce family might be interesting, but we younger ones could not forget the slight to Clarence, and, besides, the girls seemed to be entirely in the schoolroom, Mrs. Fordyce was delicate and was shut up all the winter, and the only intercourse that took place was when my father met the elder Mr. Fordyce at the magistrates' bench; also there was a conference about Amos Bell, who was preferred to the post left vacant by George Sims, in right of his being our tenant, but more civilised than Earlscombers, a widow's son, and not sufficiently recovered from his accident to be exposed to the severe tasks of a ploughboy in the winter.

Mrs. Fordyce was the manager of a book-club, which circulated volumes covered in white cartridge paper, with a printed list of the subscribers' names. Two volumes at a time might be kept for a month by each member in rotation, novels were excluded, and the manager had a veto on all orders. We found her more liberal than some of our other

neighbours, who looked on our wants and wishes with suspicion as savouring of London notions. Happily we could read old books and standard books over again, and we gloated over *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly*, enjoying, too, every out-of-door novelty of the coming spring, as each revealed itself. Emily will never forget her first primroses, nor I the first thrush in early morning.

Blankets, broth, and what were uncomfortably termed broken victuals had been given away during the winter, and a bewildering amount of begging women and children used to ask interviews with 'the Lady Winslow,' with stories that crumbled on investigation so as to make us recollect the Rector's character of Earlscombe.

However, Mr. Henderson came in the second week of Lent, and what our steps towards improvement introduced would have seemed almost as shocking to you youngsters, as what they displaced. For instance, a plain crimson cloth covered the altar, instead of the rags in the colours of the Winslow livery, presented, according to the queer old register, by the unfortunate Margaret. There was talk of velvet and the gold monogram, surrounded by rays, alternately straight and wavy, as in our London church, but this was voted 'unfit for a plain village church.' Still, the new hangings of pulpit, desk, and altar were all good in quality and colour, and huge

square cushions were provided as essential to each. Moreover, the altar vessels were made somewhat more respectable,—all this being at my father's expense.

He also carried in the Vestry, though not without strong opposition from a dissenting farmer, that new linen and a fresh surplice should be provided by the parish, which surplice would have made at least six of such as are at present worn. The farmers were very jealous of the interference of the Squire in the Vestry—‘what he had no call to,’ and of church rates applied to any other object than the reward of birdslayers, as thus, in the register—

Hairy Wills, 1 score sprows heds . . .	2d.
Jems Brown, 1 pouleat . . .	6d.
Jarge Bell, 2 howls . . .	6d.

It was several years before this appropriation of the church rates could be abolished. The year 1830, with a brand new squire and parson, was too ticklish a time for many innovations.

Hillside Church was the only one in the neighbourhood where Holy Week or Ascension Day had been observed in the memory of man. When we proposed going to church on the latter day the gardener asked my mother ‘if it was her will to keep Thursday holy,’ as if he expected its substitution for Sunday. Monthly Communions and Baptisms after the Second Lesson were viewed as

‘not fit for a country church,’ and every attempt at even more secular improvements was treated with the most disappointing distrust and aversion. When my father laid out the allotment grounds, the labourers suspected some occult design for his own profit, and the farmers objected that the gardens would be used as an excuse for neglecting their work and stealing their potatoes. Coal-club and clothing-club were regarded in like manner, and while a few took advantage of these offers in a grudging manner, the others viewed everything except absolute gifts as ‘me-an’ on our part, the principle of aid to self-help being an absolute novelty. When I look back to the notes in our journals of that date I see how much has been overcome.

Perhaps we listened more than was strictly wise to the revelations of Amos Bell, when he attended Emily and me on our expeditions with the donkey. Though living over the border of Hillside, he had a family of relations at Earlscombe, and for a time lodged with his grandmother there. When his shyness and lumpishness gave way, he proved so bright that Emily undertook to carry on his education. He soon had a wonderful eye for a wild flower, and would climb after it with the utmost agility; and when once his tongue was loosed, he became almost too communicative, and made us acquainted with the opinions of ‘they Earlscoom

folk' with a freedom not to be found in an elder or a native.

Moreover, he was the brightest light of the Sunday school which Mr. Henderson opened at once—for want of a more fitting place—in the dis-used north transept of the church. It was an uncouth, ill-clad crew which assembled on those dilapidated paving tiles. Their own grandchildren look almost as far removed from them in dress and civilisation as did my sister in her white worked cambric dress, silk scarf, huge Tuscan bonnet, and the little curls beyond the lace quilling round her bright face, far rosier than ever it had been in town. And what would the present generation say to the odd little contrivances in the way of cotton sun-bonnets, check pinafores, list tippets, and print capes, and other wonderful manufactures from the rag-bag, which were then grand prizes and stimulants?

Previous knowledge or intelligence scarcely existed, and then was not due to Dame Dearlove's tuition. Mr. Henderson pronounced an authorised school a necessity. My father had scruples as to vested rights, for the old woman was the last survivor of a family who had had recourse to primer and hornbook after their ejection on 'black Bartholomew's Day;' and when the meeting-house was built after the Revolution, had combined preaching

with teaching. Monopoly had promoted degeneracy, and this last of the race was an unfavourable specimen in all save outward picturesqueness. However, much against Henderson's liking, an accommodation was proposed, by which books were to be supplied to her, and the Church Catechism be taught in her school, with the assistance of the curate and Miss Winslow.

The terms were rejected with scorn. No School Board could be more determined against the Catechism, nor against 'passons meddling wi' she;' and as to assistance, 'she had been a governess this thirty year, and didn't want no one trapesing in and out of her school.'

She was warned, but probably did not believe in the possibility of an opposition school; and really there were children enough in the place to overfill both her room and that which was fitted up after a very humble fashion in one of our cottages. H.M. Inspector would hardly have thought it even worth condemnation any more than the attainments of the mistress, the young widow of a small Bristol skipper. Her qualifications consisted in her piety and conscientiousness, good temper and excellent needlework, together with her having been a scholar in one of Mrs. Hannah More's schools in the Cheddar district. She could read and teach reading well; but as for the dangerous accomplishments of writing and

arithmetic, such as desired to pass beyond the rudiments of them must go to Wattlesea.

So nice did she look in her black that Earlscombe voted her a mere town lady, and even at a penny a week hesitated to send its children to her. Indeed it was currently reported that her school was part of a deep and nefarious scheme of the gentlefolks for reducing the poor-rates by enticing the children, and then shipping them off to foreign parts from Bristol.

But the great crisis was one unlucky summer evening when Emily and I were out with the donkey, and Griffith, just come home from Oxford, was airing the new acquisition of a handsome black retriever.

Close by the old chapel, a black cat was leisurely crossing the road. At her dashed Nero, stimulated perhaps by an almost involuntary scss—scss—from his master, if not from Amos and me. The cat flew up a low wall, and stood at bay on the top on tip-toe, with bristling tail, arched back, and fiery eyes, while the dog danced round in agony on his hind legs, barking furiously, and almost reaching her. Female sympathy ever goes to the cat, and Emily screamed out in the fear that he would seize her, or even that Griff might aid him. Perhaps Amos would have done so, if left to himself; but Griff, who saw the cat was safe, could not help egging on his dog's impotent rage, when in the midst, out flew

pussy's mistress, Dame Dearlove herself, broomstick in hand, using language as vituperative as the cat's, and more intelligible.

She was about to strike the dog—indeed I fancy she did, for there was a howl, and Griff sprang to his defence with—‘Don't hurt my dog, I say! He hasn't touched the brute! She can take care of herself. Here, there's half-a-crown for the fright,’ as the cat sprang down within the wall, and Nero slunk behind him. But Dame Dearlove was not so easily appeased. Her blood was up after our long series of offences, and she broke into a regular tirade of abuse.

‘That's the way with you fine folk, thinking you can tread down poor people like the dirt under your feet, and insult 'em when you've taken the bread out of the mouths of them that were here before you. Passons and ladies a meddin' where no one ever set a foot before! Ay, ay, but ye'll all be down before long.’

Griff signed to us to go on, and thundered out on her to take care what she was about and not be abusive; but this brought a fresh volley on him, heralded by a derisive laugh. ‘Ha! ha! fine talking for the likes of you, Winslows that you are. But there's a curse on you all! The poor lady as was murdered won't let you be! Why, there's one of you, poor humpy object——’

At this savage attack on me, Griff waxed furious, and shouted at her to hold her confounded tongue, but this only diverted the attack on himself. 'And as for you—fine chap as ye think yourself, swaggering and swearing at poor folk, and setting your dog at them—your time's coming. Look out for yourself. It's well known as how the curse is on the first-born. The Lady Margaret don't let none of 'em live to come after his father.'

Griff laughed and said, 'There, we have had enough of this;' and in fact we had already moved on, so that he had to make some long steps to overtake us, muttering, 'So we've started a Meg Merri-lies! My father won't keep such a foul-mouthed hag in the parish long!'

To which I had to respond that her cottage belonged to the trustees of the chapel, whereat he whistled. I don't think he knew that we had heard her final denunciation, and we did not like to mention it to him, scarcely to each other, though Emily looked very white and scared.

We talked it over afterwards in private, and with Henderson, who confessed that he had heard of the old woman's saying something of the kind to other persons. We consulted the registers in hopes of confuting it, but did not satisfy ourselves. The last Squire had lost his only son at school. He himself had been originally second in the family,

and in the generation before him there had been some child-deaths, after which we came back to a young man, apparently the eldest, who, according to Miss Selby's story, had been killed in a duel by one of the Fordyces. It was not comfortable, till I remembered that our family Bible recorded the birth, baptism, and death of a son who had preceded Griffith, and only borne for a day the name afterwards bestowed on me.

And Henderson, who was so little our elder as to discuss things on fairly equal grounds, had some very interesting talks with us two over ancestral sin and its possible effects, dwelling on the 18th of Ezekiel as a comment on the Second Commandment. Indeed, we agreed that the uncomfortable state of disaffection which, in 1830, was becoming only too manifest in the populace, was the result of neglect in former ages, and that, even in our own parish, the bitterness, distrust, and ingratitude were due to the careless, riotous, and oppressive family whom we represented.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SIEGE OF HILLSIDE.

‘ Ferments arise, imprisoned factions roar,
Represt ambition struggles round the shore ;
Till, overwrought, the general system feels
Its motion stop, or frenzy fire the wheels.’

GOLDSMITH.

GRIFFITH had come straight home this year. There were no Peacock gaieties to tempt him in London, for old Sir Henry had died suddenly soon after the ball in December ; nor was there much of a season that year, owing to the illness and death of George IV.

A regiment containing two old schoolmates of his was at Bristol, and he spent a good deal of time there, and also in Yeomanry drill. As autumn came on we rejoiced in having so stalwart a protector, for the agricultural riots had begun, and the forebodings of another French Revolution seemed about to be realised. We stayed on at Chantry House. My father thought his duty lay there as a magistrate, and my mother would not leave him ; nor indeed was any other place much safer, certainly not London,

whence Clarence wrote accounts of formidable mobs who were expected to do more harm than they accomplished; though their hatred of the hero of our country filled us with direful prognostications, and made us think of the guillotine, which was linked with revolution in our minds, before we had beheld the numerous changes that followed upon the thirty years of peace in which we grew up.

The ladies did not much like losing so stalwart a defender when Griff returned to Oxford; and Jane the housemaid went to bed every night with the pepper-pot and a poker, the first wherewith to blind the enemy, the second to charge them with. From our height we could more than once see blazing ricks, and were glad that the home farm was not in our own hands, and that our only stack of hay was a good way from the house. When the onset came at last, it was December, and the enemy only consisted of about thirty dreary-looking men and boys in smock-frocks and chalked or smutted faces, armed only with sticks and an old gun diverted from its purpose of bird-scaring. They shouted for food, money, and arms; but my father spoke to them from the hall steps, told them they had better go home and learn that the public-house was a worse enemy to them than any machine that had ever been invented, and assured them that they would get no help from him in breaking the laws and getting

themselves into trouble. A stone or two was picked up, whereupon he went back and had the hall door shut and barred, the heavy shutters of the windows having all been closed already, so that we could have stood a much more severe siege than from these poor fellows. One or two windows were broken, as well as the glass of the conservatory, and the flower beds were trampled ; but finding our fortress impregnable they sneaked away before dark. We fared better than our neighbours, some of whom were seriously frightened, and suffered loss of property. Old Mr. Fordyce had for many years past been an active magistrate—that a clergyman should be on the bench having been quite correct according to the notions of his younger days ; and in spite of his beneficence he incurred a good deal of unpopularity for withstanding the lax good-nature which made his brother magistrates give orders for parish relief refused to able-bodied paupers by their own Vestries. This was a mischievous abuse of the old poor-law times, which made people dispose of every one's money save their own. He had also been a keen sportsman ; and though his son had given up field sports in deference to higher notions of clerical duty (his wife's, as people said), the old man's feeling prompted him to severity on poachers. Frank Fordyce, while by far the most earnest, hard-working clergyman in the neighbourhood, worked off

his superfluous energy on scientific farming, making the glebe and the hereditary estate as much the model farm as Hillside was the model parish. He had lately set up a threshing-machine worked by horses, which was as much admired by the intelligent as it was vituperated by the ignorant.

Neither paupers nor poachers abounded in Hillside; the natives were chiefly tenants and employed on the property, and, between good management and beneficence, there was little real want and much friendly confidence and affection; and thus, in spite of surrounding riots, Hillside seemed likely to be an exception, proving what could be done by rightful care and attention. Nor indeed did the attack come from thence; but the two parsons were bitterly hated by outsiders beyond the reach of their personal influence and benevolence.

It was on a Saturday evening, the day after Griff had come back for the Christmas vacation, that, as Emily was giving Amos his lesson, she saw that the boy was crying, and after examination he let out that 'folk should say that the lads were agoing to break Parson Fordy's machine and fire his ricks that very night;' but he would not give his authority, and when he saw her about to give warning, entreated, 'Now, dont'ze say nothing, Miss Emily——'

'What?' she cried indignantly; 'do you think

I could hear of such a thing without trying to stop it ?’

‘Us says,’ he blurted out, ‘as how Winslows be always fain of ought as happens to the Fordys——’

‘We are not such wicked Winslows as you have heard of,’ returned Emily with dignity ; and she rushed off in quest of papa and Griff, but when she brought them to the bookroom, Amos had decamped, and was nowhere to be found that night. We afterwards learnt that he lay hidden in the hay-loft, not daring to return to his granny’s, lest he should be suspected of being a traitor to his kind ; for our lawless, untamed, discontented parish furnished a large quota to the rioters, and he has since told me that though all seemed to know what was about to be done, he did not hear it from any one in particular.

It was no time to make light of a warning, but very difficult to know what to do. Rural police were non-existent ; there were no soldiers nearer than Keynsham, and the Yeomanry were all in their own homesteads. However, the captain of Griff’s troop, Sir George Eastwood, lived about three miles beyond Wattlesea, and had a good many dependants in the corps, so it was resolved to send him a note by the gardener, good James Ellis, a steady, resolute man, on Emily’s fast-trotting pony, while my father and Griff should hasten to Hillside to warn the Fordyces, who were not unlikely to be able to muster trust-

worthy defenders among their own people, and might send the ladies to take shelter at Chantry House.

My mother's brave spirit disdained to detain an effective man for her own protection, and the groom was to go to Hillside ; he was in the Yeomanry, and, like Griff, put on his uniform, while my father had the Riot Act in his pocket. All the horses were thus absorbed, but Chapman and the man-servant followed on foot.

Never did I feel my incapacity more than on that strange night, when Emily was flying about with Martyn to all the doors and windows in a wild state of excitement, humming to herself—

‘ When the dawn on the mountain was misty and gray,
My true love has mounted his steed and away.’

My mother was equally restless, prolonging as much as possible the preparation of rooms for possible guests ; and when she did come and sit down, she netted her purse with vehement jerks, and scolded Emily for jumping up and leaving doors open.

At last, after an hour according to the clock, but far more by our feelings, wheels were heard in the distance ; Emily was off like a shot to reconnoitre, and presently Martyn bounced in with the tidings that a pair of carriage lamps were coming up the drive. My mother hurried out into the hall ; I made my best speed after her, and found her hastily undoing the door-chain as she recognised the measured,

courteous voice of old Mr. Fordyce. In a moment more they were all in the house, the old gentleman giving his arm to his daughter-in-law, who was quite overcome with distress and alarm; then came his tall, slim granddaughter, carrying her little sister with arms full of dolls, and sundry maid-servants completed the party of fugitives.

‘We are taking advantage of Mr. Winslow’s goodness,’ said the old Rector. ‘He assured us that you would be kind enough to receive those who would only be an encumbrance.’

‘Oh, but I must go back to Frank now that you and the children are safe,’ cried the poor lady. ‘Don’t send away the carriage; I must go back to Frank.’

‘Nonsense, my dear,’ returned Mr. Fordyce, ‘Frank is in no danger. He will get on much better for knowing you are safe. Mrs. Winslow will tell you so.’

My mother was enforcing this assurance, when the little girl’s sobs burst out in spite of her sister, who had been trying to console her. ‘It is Celestina Mary,’ she cried, pointing to three dolls whom she had carried in clasped to her breast. ‘Poor Celestina Mary! She is left behind, and Ellen won’t let me go and see if she is in the carriage.’

‘My dear, if she is in the carriage, she will be quite safe in the morning.’

‘Oh, but she will be so cold. She had nothing on but Rosella’s old petticoat.’

The distress was so real that I had my hand on the bell to cause a search to be instituted for the missing damsel, when Mrs. Fordyce begged me to do no such thing, as it was only a doll. The child, while endeavouring to shelter with a shawl the dolls, snatched in their night-gear from their beds, wept so piteously at the rebuff that her grandfather had nearly gone in quest of the lost one, but was stopped by a special entreaty that he would not spoil the child. Martyn, however, who had been standing in open-mouthed wonder at such feeling for a doll, exclaimed, ‘Don’t cry, don’t cry. I’ll go and get it for you;’ and rushed off to the stable-yard.

This episode had restored Mrs. Fordyce, and while providing some of our guests with wine, and others with tea, we heard the story, only interrupted by Martyn’s return from a vain search, and Anne’s consequent tears, which, however, were somehow hushed and smothered by fears of being sent to bed, coupled with his promises to search every step of the way to-morrow.

It appeared that while the Fordyce family were at dinner, shouts, howls and yells had startled them. The rabble had surrounded the Rectory, bawling out abuse of the parsons and their machines, and occasionally throwing stones. There was no help

to be expected ; the only hope was in the strength of the doors and windows, and the knowledge that personal violence was very uncommon ; but those were terrible moments, and poor Mrs. Fordyce was nearly dead with suppressed terror when her husband tried haranguing from an upper window, and was received with execrations and a volley of stones, while the glass crashed round him.

At that instant the shouts turned to yells of dismay, 'The so'diers ! the so'diers !'

Our party had found everything still and dark in the village, for in truth the men had hidden themselves. They were being too much attached to their masters to join in the attack, but were afraid of being compelled to assist the rioters, and not resolute enough against their own class either to inform against them or oppose them.

Through the midnight-like stillness of the street rose the tumult around the Rectory ; and by the light of a few lanterns, and from the upper windows, they could see a mass of old hats, smock-frocked shoulders, and the tops of bludgeons ; while at soonest, Sir George Eastwood's troop could not be expected for an hour or more.

'We must get to them somehow,' said my father and Griff to one another ; and Griff added, 'These rascals are arrant cowards, and they can't see the number of us.'

Then, before my father knew what he was about—certainly before he could get hold of the Riot Act—he found the stable lantern made over to him, and Griff's sword flashing in light, as, making all possible clatter and jingling with their accoutrements, the two yeomen dashed among the throng, shouting with all their might, and striking with the flat of their swords. The rioters, ill-fed, dull-hearted men for the most part—many dragged out by compulsion, and already terrified—went tumbling over one another and running off headlong, bearing off with them (as we afterwards learnt) their leaders by their weight, taking the blows and pushes they gave one another in their pell-mell rush for those of the soldiery, and falling blindly against the low wall of the enclosure. The only difficulty was in clearing them out at the two gates of the drive.

When Mr. Fordyce opened the door to hail his rescuers he was utterly amazed to behold only three, and asked in a bewildered voice, 'Where are the others?'

There were two prisoners, Petty the ratcatcher, who had attempted some resistance and had been knocked down by Griff's horse, and a young lad in a smock-frock who had fallen off the wall and hurt his knee, and who blubbered piteously, declaring that them chaps had forced him to go with them, or they would duck him in the horse-pond. They

were supposed to be given in charge to some one, but were lost sight of, and no wonder! For just then it was discovered that the machine shed was on fire. The rioters had apparently detached one of their number to kindle the flame before assaulting the house. The matter was specially serious, because the stackyard was on a line with the Rectory, at some distance indeed, but on lower ground; and what with barns, hay and wheat ricks, sheds, cowhouses and stables, all thatched, a big wood-pile, and a long old-fashioned greenhouse, there was almost continuous communication. Clouds of smoke and an ominous smell were already perceptible on the wind, generated by the heat, and the loose straw in the centre of the farmyard was beginning to be ignited by the flakes and sparks, carrying the mischief everywhere, and rendering it exceedingly difficult to release the animals and drive them to a place of safety. Water was scarce. There were only two wells, besides the pump in the house, and a shallow pond. The brook was a quarter of a mile off in the valley, and the nearest engine, a poor feeble thing, at Wattlesea. Moreover, the assailants might discover how small was the force of rescuers, and return to the attack. Thus, while Griff, who had given amateur assistance at all the fires he could reach in London, was striving to organise resist-

ance to this new enemy, my father induced the gentlemen to cause the horses to be put to the various vehicles, and employ them in carrying the women and children to Chantry House. The old Rector was persuaded to go to take care of his daughter-in-law, and she only thought of putting her girls in safety. She listened to reason, and indeed was too much exhausted to move when once she was laid on the sofa. She would not hear of going to bed, though her little daughter Anne was sent off with her nurse, grandpapa persuading her that Rosella and the others were very much tired. When she was gone, he declared his fears that he had sat down on Celestina's head, and showed so much compunction that we were much amused at his relief when Martyn assured him of having searched the carriage with a stable lantern, so that whatever had befallen the lady he was not the guilty person. He really seemed more concerned about this than at the loss of all his own barns and stores. And little Anne was certainly as lovely and engaging a little creature as ever I saw ; while, as to her elder sister, in all the trouble and anxiety of the night, I could not help enjoying the sight of her beautiful eager face and form. She was tall and very slight, sylph-like, as it was the fashion to call it, but every limb was instinct with grace and animation. Her face was, perhaps, rather

too thin for robust health, though this enhanced the idea of her being all spirit, as also did the transparency of complexion, tinted with an exquisite varying carnation. Her eyes were of a clear, bright, rather light brown, and were sparkling with the lustre of excitement, her delicate lips parted, showing the pretty pearly teeth, as she was telling Emily, in a low voice of enthusiasm, scarcely designed for my ears, how glorious a sight our brother had been, riding there in his glancing silver, bearing down all before him with his good sword, like the Captal de Buch dispersing the Jacquerie.

To which Emily responded, ‘Oh, don’t you love the Captal de Buch?’ And their friendship was cemented.

Next I heard, ‘And that you should have been so good after all my rudeness. But I thought you were like the old Winslows; and instead of that you have come to the rescue of your enemies. Isn’t it beautiful?’

‘Oh no, not enemies,’ said Emily. ‘That was all over a hundred years ago!’

‘So my papa and grandpapa say,’ returned Miss Fordyce; ‘but the last Mr. Winslow was not a very nice man, and never would be civil to us.’

A report was brought that the glare of the fire could be seen over the hill from the top of the house, and off went the two young ladies to the leads,

after satisfying themselves that Anne was asleep among her homeless dolls.

Old Mr. Fordyce devoted himself to keeping up the spirits of his daughter-in-law as the night advanced without any tidings, except that the girls, from time to time, rushed down to tell us of fresh outbursts of red flame reflected in the sky, then that the glow was diminishing; by which time they were tired out, and, both sinking into a big arm-chair, they went to sleep in each other's arms. Indeed I believe we all dozed more or less before any one returned from the scene of action—at about three o'clock.

The struggle with the flames had been very unequal. The long tongues soon reached the roof of the large barn, which was filled with straw, nor could the flakes of burning thatch be kept from the stable, while the water of the pond was soon reduced to mud. Helpers began to flock in, but who could tell which were trustworthy? and all were uncomprehending.

There was so little hope of saving the house that the removal of everything valuable was begun under my father's superintendence. Frank Fordyce was here, there, and everywhere; while Griffith, like a gallant general, fought the foe with very helpless unmanageable forces. Villagers, male and female, had emerged and stood gaping round; but, let him

rage and storm as he might, they *would* not go and collect pails and buckets and form a line to the brook. Still less would they assist in overthrowing and carrying away the faggots of a big wood-pile so as to cut off the communication with the offices. Only Chapman and one other man gave any help in this; and presently the stack caught, and Griff, on the top, was in great peril of the faggots rolling down with him into the middle, and imprisoning him in the blazing pile. 'I never felt so like Dido,' said Griff.

That woodstack gave fearful aliment to the roaring flame, which came on so fast that the destruction of the adjoining buildings quickly followed. The Wattlesea engine had come, but the yard well was unattainable, and all that could be done was to saturate the house with water from its own well, and cover the side with wet blankets; but these reeked with steam, and then shrivelled away in the intense glow of heat.

However, by this time the Eastwood Yeomanry, together with some reasonable men, had arrived. A raid was made on the cottages for buckets, a chain formed to the river, and at last the fire was got under, having made a wreck of everything out-of-doors, and consumed one whole wing of the house, though the older and more esteemed portion was saved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PORTRAIT.

‘ When day was gone and night was come,
And all men fast asleep,
There came the spirit of fair Marg’ret
And stood at William’s feet.’

Scotch Ballad.

WHEN I emerged from my room the next morning the phaeton was at the door to take the two clergymen to reconnoitre their abode before going to church. Miss Fordyce went with them, and my father was for once about to leave his parish church to give them his sympathy, and join in their thanksgiving that neither life nor limb had been injured.

He afterwards said that nothing could have been more touching than old Mr. Fordyce’s manner of mentioning this special cause for gratitude before the General Thanksgiving; and Frank Fordyce, having had all his sermons burnt, gave a short address extempore (a very rare and almost shocking thing at that date), reducing half the congregation to tears, for they really loved ‘the fam’ly,’ though they had

not spirit enough to defend it; and their passiveness always remained a subject of pride and pleasure to the Fordyces. It was against the will of these good people that Petty, the ratcatcher, was arrested, but he had been engaged in other outrages, though this was the only one in which a dwelling-house had suffered. And Chapman observed that 'there was nothing to be done with such chaps but to string 'em up out of the way.'

Griff had toiled that night till he was as stiff as a rheumatic old man when he came down only just in time for luncheon. Mrs. Fordyce did not appear at all. She was a fragile creature, and quite knocked up by the agitations of the night. The gentlemen had visited the desolate rectory, and found that though the fine ancient kitchen had escaped, the pleasant living rooms had been injured by the water, and the place could hardly be made habitable before the spring. They proposed to take a house in Bath, whence Frank Fordyce could go and come for Sunday duty and general superintendence, but my parents were urgent that they should not leave us until after Christmas, and they consented. Their larger possessions were to be stored in the outhouses, their lesser in our house, notably in the inner mullion chamber, which would thus be so blocked that there would be no question of sleeping in it.

Old Mr. Fordyce had ascertained that he might

acquit himself of smashing Celestina Mary, for no remains appeared in the carriage; but a miserable trunk was discovered in the ruins, which he identified—though surely no one else save the disconsolate parent could have done so. Poor little Anne's private possessions had suffered most severely of all, for her whole nursery establishment had vanished. Her surviving dolls were left homeless, and devoid of all save their night-clothing, which concerned her much more than the loss of almost all her own garments. For what dolls were to her could never have been guessed by us, who had forced Emily to disdain them; whereas they were children to the maternal heart of this lonely child.

She was quite a new revelation to us. All the Fordyces were handsome; and her chestnut curls and splendid eyes, her pretty colour and unconscious grace, were very charming. Emily was so near our own age that we had never known the winsomeness of a little maid-child amongst us, and she was a perpetual wonder and delight to us. Indeed, from having always lived with her elders, she was an odd little old-fashioned person, advanced in some ways, and comically simple in others. Her doll-heart was kept in abeyance all Sunday, and it was only on Monday that her anxiety for Celestina manifested itself with considerable vehemence; but her grandfather gravely informed her that the young

lady was gone to an excellent doctor, who would soon effect a cure. The which was quite true, for he had sent her to a toy-shop by one of the maids who had gone to restore the ravage on the wardrobes, and who brought her back with a new head and arms, her identity apparently not being thus interfered with. The hoards of scraps were put under requisition to re-clothe the survivors; and I won my first step in Miss Anne's good graces by undertaking a knitted suit for Rosella.

The good little girl had evidently been schooled to repress her dread and repugnance at my unlucky appearance, and was painfully polite, only shutting her eyes when she came to shake hands with me; but after Rosella condescended to adopt me, we became excellent friends. Indeed the following conversation was overheard by Emily, and set down:

‘Do you know, Martyn, there's a fairies' ring on Hillside Down?’

‘Mushrooms,’ quoth Martyn.

‘Yes, don't you know? They are the fairies' tables. They come out and spread them with lily tablecloths at night, and have acorn cups for dishes, with honey in them. And they dance and play there. Well, couldn't Mr. Edward go and sit under the beech-tree at the edge till they come?’

‘I don't think he would like it at all,’ said Martyn. ‘He never goes out at odd times.’

‘ Oh, but don’t you know ? when they come they begin to sing—

“ Sunday and Monday,
Monday and Tuesday.”

And if he was to sing nicely,

“ Wednesday and Thursday,”

they would be so much pleased that they would make his back straight again in a moment. At least, perhaps Wednesday and Thursday would not do, because the little tailor taught them those ; but Friday makes them angry. But suppose he made some nice verse—

“ Monday and Tuesday
The fairies are gay,
Tuesday and Wednesday
They dance away—”

I think that would do as well, perhaps. Do get him to do so, Martyn. It would be so nice if he was tall and straight.’

Dear little thing ! Martyn, who was as much her slave as was her grandfather, absolutely made her shed tears over his history of our accident, and then caressed them off ; but I believe he persuaded her that such a case might be beyond the fairies’ reach, and that I could hardly get to the spot in secret, which, it seems, is an essential point. He had imagination enough to be almost persuaded of fairy-land by her earnestness, and she certainly took

him into doll-land. He had a turn for carpentry and contrivance, and he undertook that the Ladies Rosella, etc., should be better housed than ever. A great packing-case was routed out, and much ingenuity was expended, much delight obtained, in the process of converting it into a doll's mansion, and replenishing it with furniture. Some was bought, but Martyn aspired to make whatever he could; I did a good deal, and I believe most of our achievements are still extant. Whatever we could not manage, Clarence was to accomplish when he should come home.

His arrival was, as usual, late in the evening; and, as before, he had the little room within mine. In the morning, as we were crossing the hall to the bright wood fire, around which the family were wont to assemble before prayers, he came to a pause, asking under his breath, 'What's that? Who's that?'

'It is one of the Hillside pictures. You know we have a great many things here from thence.'

'It is *she*,' he said, in a low, awe-stricken voice. No need to say who *she* meant.

I had not paid much attention to the picture. It had come with several more, such as are rife in country houses, and was one of the worst of the lot, a poor imitation of Lely's style, with a certain air common to all the family; but Clarence's eyes were riveted on it. 'She looks younger,' he said; 'but

it is the same. I could swear to the lip and the whole shape of the brow and chin. No—the dress is different.’

For in the portrait, there was nothing on the head, and one long lock of hair fell on the shoulder of the low-cut white-satin dress, done in very heavy gray shading. The three girls came down together, and I asked who the lady was.

‘Don’t you know? You ought; for that is poor Margaret who married your ancestor.’

No more was said then, for the rest of the world was collecting, and then everybody went out their several ways. Some tin tacks were wanted for the dolls’ house, and there were reports that Wattlesa possessed a doll’s grate and fire-irons. The children were wild to go in quest of them, but they were not allowed to go alone, and it was pronounced too far and too damp for the elder sister, so that they would have been disappointed, if Clarence—stimulated by Martyn’s kicks under the table—had not offered to be their escort. When Mrs. Fordyce demurred, my mother replied, ‘You may perfectly trust her with Clarence.’

‘Yes; I don’t know a safer squire,’ rejoined my father.

Commendation was so rare that Clarence quite blushed with pleasure; and the pretty little thing was given into his charge, prancing and dancing

with pleasure, and expecting much more from sixpence and from Wattlesea than was likely to be fulfilled.

Griff went out shooting, and the two young ladies and I intended to spend a very rational morning in the bookroom, reading aloud Mme. de La Rochejaquelein's *Memoirs* by turns. Our occupations were, on Emily's part, completing a reticule, in a mosaic of shaded coloured beads no bigger than pins' heads, for a Christmas gift to mamma—a most wearisome business, of which she had grown extremely tired. Miss Fordyce was elaborately copying our Müller's print of Raffaele's St. John in pencil on cardboard, so as to be as near as possible a facsimile; and she had trusted me to make a finished water-coloured drawing from a rough sketch of hers of the Hillside barn and farm-buildings, now no more.

In a pause Ellen Fordyce suddenly asked, 'What did you mean about that picture?'

'Only Clarence said it was like——' and here Emily came to a dead stop.

'Grandpapa says it is like me,' said Miss Fordyce. 'What, you don't mean *that*? Oh! oh! oh! is it true? Does she walk? Have you seen her? Mamma calls it all nonsense, and would not have Anne hear of it for anything; but old Aunt Peggy used to tell me, and I am sure grandpapa believes it, just a little. Have you seen her?'

‘Only Clarence has, and he knew the picture directly.’

She was much impressed, and on slight persuasion related the story, which she had heard from an elder sister of her grandfather’s, and which had perhaps been the more impressed on her by her mother’s consternation at ‘such folly’ having been communicated to her. Aunt Peggy, who was much older than her brother, had died only four years ago, at eighty-eight, having kept her faculties to the last, and handed down many traditions to her great-niece. The old lady’s father had been contemporary with the Margaret of ghostly fame, so that the stages had been few through which it had come down from 1708 to 1830.

I wrote it down at once, as it here stands.

Margaret was the only daughter of the elder branch of the Fordyces. Her father had intended her to marry her cousin, the male heir on whom the Hillside estates and the advowson of that living were entailed; but before the contract had been formally made, the father was killed by accident, and through some folly and ambition of her mother’s (such seemed to be the Fordyce belief), the poor heiress was married to Sir James Winslow, one of the successful intriguers of the days of the later Stewarts, and with a family nearly as old, if not older, than herself. Her own children died

almost at their birth, and she was left a young widow. Being meek and gentle, her step-sons and daughters still ruled over Chantry House. They prevented her Hillside relations from having access to her whilst in a languishing state of health, and when she died unexpectedly, she was found to have bequeathed all her property to her step-son, Philip Winslow, instead of to her blood relations, the Fordyces.

This was certain, but the Fordyce tradition was that she had been kept shut up in the mullion chambers, where she had often been heard weeping bitterly. One night in the winter, when the gentlemen of the family had gone out to a Christmas carousal, she had endeavoured to escape by the steps leading to the garden from the door now bricked up, but had been met by them and dragged back with violence, of which she died in the course of a few days; and, what was very suspicious, she had been entirely attended by her step-daughter and an old nurse, who never would let her own woman come near her.

The Fordyces had thought of a prosecution, but the Winslows had powerful interest at Court in those corrupt times, and contrived to hush up the matter, as well as to win the suit in which the Fordyces attempted to prove that there was no right to will the property away. Bitter enmity remained

between the families ; they were always opposed in politics, and their animosity was fed by the belief which arose that at the anniversaries of her death the poor lady haunted the rooms, lamp in hand, wailing and lamenting. A duel had been fought on the subject between the heirs of the two families, resulting in the death of the young Winslow.

‘And now,’ cried Ellen Fordyce, ‘the feud is so beautifully ended ; the doom must be appeased, now that the head of one hostile line has come to the rescue of the other, and saved all our lives.’

My suggestion that these would hardly have been destroyed, even without our interposition, fell very flat, for romance must have its swing. Ellen told us how, on the news of our kinsman’s death and our inheritance, the ancestral story had been discussed, and her grandfather had said he believed there were letters about it in the iron deed-box, and how he hoped to be on better terms with the new heir.

The ghost story had always been hushed up in the family, especially since the duel, and we all knew the resemblance of the picture would be scouted by our elders ; but perhaps this gave us the more pleasure in dwelling upon it, while we agreed that poor Margaret ought to be appeased by Griffith’s prowess on behalf of the Fordyces.

The two young ladies went off to inspect the

mullion chamber, which they found so crammed with Hillside furniture that they could scarcely enter, and returned disappointed, except for having inspected and admired all Griff's weapons, especially what Miss Fordyce called the sword of her rescue.

She had been learning German—rather an unusual study in those days, and she narrated to us most effectively the story of *Die Weisse Frau*, working herself up to such a pitch that she would have actually volunteered to spend a night in the room, to see whether Margaret would hold any communication with a descendant, after the example of the White Woman and Lady Bertha, if there had been either fire or accommodation, and if the only entrance had not been through Griff's private sitting-room.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WHITE FEATHER.

‘The white doe’s milk is not out of his mouth.’—SCOTT.

CLARENCE had come home free from all blots. His summer holiday had been prevented by the illness of one of the other clerks, whose place, Mr. Castleford wrote, he had so well supplied that ere long he would be sure to earn his promotion. That kind friend had several times taken him to spend a Sunday in the country, and, as we afterwards had reason to think, would have taken more notice of him but for the rooted belief of Mr. Frith that it was a case of favouritism, and that piety and strictness were assumed to throw dust in the eyes of his patron.

Such distrust had tended to render Clarence more reserved than ever, and it was quite by the accident of finding him studying one of Mrs. Trimmer’s Manuals that I discovered that, at the request of his good Rector, he had become a Sunday-school teacher, and was as much interested as the

enthusiastic girls; but I was immediately forbidden to utter a word on the subject, even to Emily, lest she should tell *any one*.

Such reserve was no doubt an outcome of his natural timidity. He had to bear a certain amount of scorn and derision among some of his fellow-clerks for the stricter habits and observances that could not be concealed, and he dreaded any fresh revelation of them, partly because of the cruel imputation of hypocrisy, partly because he feared the bringing a scandal on religion by his weakness and failures.

Nor did our lady visitors' ways reassure him, though they meant to be kind. They could not help being formal and stiff, not as they were with Griff and me. The two gentlemen were thoroughly friendly and hearty; Parson Frank could hardly have helped being so towards any one in the same house with himself; and as to little Anne, she found in the new-comer a carpenter and upholsterer superior even to Martyn; but her candour revealed a great deal which I overheard one afternoon, when the two children were sitting together on the hearth-rug in the bookroom in the twilight.

'I want to see Mr. Clarence's white feather,' observed Anne.

'Griff has a white plume in his Yeomanry helmet,' replied Martyn; 'Clarence hasn't one.'

'Oh, I saw Mr. Griffith's!' she answered; 'but

Cousin Horace said Mr. Clarence showed the white feather.'

'Cousin Horace is an ape!' cried Martyn.

'I don't think he is so nice as an ape,' said Anne. 'He is more like a monkey. He tries the dolls by court-martial, and he shot Arabella with a pea-shooter, and broke her eye; only grandpapa made him have it put in again with his own money, and then he said I was a little sneak, and if I ever did it again he would shoot me.'

'Mind you don't tell Clarence what he said,' said Martyn.

'Oh, no! I think Mr. Clarence very nice indeed; but Horace did tease so about that day when he carried poor Amos Bell home. He said Ellen had gone and made friends with the worst of all the wicked Winslows, who had shown the white feather and disgraced his flag. No; I know you are not wicked. And Mr. Griff came all glittering, like Richard Cœur de Lion, and saved us all that night. But Ellen cried to think what she had done, and mamma said it showed what it was to speak to a strange young man; and she has never let Ellen and me go out of the grounds by ourselves since that day.'

'It is a horrid shame,' exclaimed Martyn, 'that a fellow can't get into a scrape without its being for ever cast up to him.'

‘*I like him,*’ said Anne. ‘He gave Mary Bell a nice pair of boots, and he made a new pair of legs for poor old Arabella, and she can really sit down! Oh, he is *very* nice; but’—in an awful whisper—‘does he tell stories? I mean fibs—falsehoods.’

‘Who told you that?’ exclaimed Martyn.

‘Mamma said it. Ellen was telling them something about the picture of the white-satin lady, and mamma said, “Oh, if it is only that young man, no doubt it is a mere mystification;” and papa said, “Poor young fellow, he seems very amiable and well disposed;” and mamma said, “If he can invent such a story, it shows that Horace was right, and he is not to be believed.” Then they stopped, but I asked Ellen who it was, and she said it was Mr. Clarence, and it was a sad thing for Emily and all of you to have such a brother.’

Martyn began to stammer with indignation, and I thought it time to interfere; so I called the little maid, and gravely explained the facts, adding that poor Clarence’s punishment had been terrible, but that he was doing his best to make up for what was past; and that, as to anything he might have told, though he might be mistaken, he never said anything *now* but what he believed to be true. She raised her brown eyes to mine full of gravity, and said, ‘*I do like him.*’ Moreover, I privately made Martyn understand that if he told her what had been said

about the white-satin lady, he would never be forgiven; the others would be sure to find it out, and it might shorten their stay.

That was a dreadful idea, for the presence of those two creatures, to say nothing of their parents, was an unspeakable charm and novelty to us all. We all worshipped the elder, and the little one was like a new discovery and toy to us, who had never been used to such a presence. She was not a commonplace child; but even if she had been, she would have been as charming a study as a kitten; and she had all the four of us at her feet, though her mother was constantly protesting against our spoiling her, and really kept up so much wholesome discipline that the little maid never exceeded the bounds of being charming to us. After that explanation there was the same sweet wistful gentleness in her manner towards Clarence as she showed to me; while he, who never dreamt of such a child knowing his history, was brighter and freer with her than with any one else, played with her and Martyn, and could be heard laughing merrily with them. Perhaps her mother and sister did not fully like this, but they could not interfere before our faces. And Parson Frank was really kind to him; took him out walking when going to Hillside, and talked to him so as to draw him out; certifying, perhaps, that he would do no harm, although, indeed, the family looked on

dear good Frank as a sort of boy, too kind-hearted and genial for his approval to be worth as much as that of the more severe.

These were our only Christmas visitors, for the state of the country did not invite Londoners ; but we did not want them. The suppression of Clarence was the only flaw in a singularly happy time ; and, after all, I believe I felt the pity of it more than he did, who expected nothing, and was accustomed to being in the background.

For instance, one afternoon in the course of one of the grave discussions that used to grow up between Miss Fordyce, Emily, and me, over subjects trite to the better-instructed younger generation, we got quite out of our shallow depths. I think it was on the meaning of the ‘Communion of Saints,’ for the two girls were both reading in preparation for a Confirmation at Bristol, and Miss Fordyce knew more than we did on these subjects. All the time Clarence had sat in the window, carving a bit of doll’s furniture, and quite forgotten ; but at night he showed me the exposition copied from *Pearson on the Creed*, a bit of Hooker, and extracts from one or two sermons. I found these were notes written out in a blank book, which he had had in hand ever since his Confirmation—his logbook as he called it ; but he would not hear of their being mentioned even to Emily, and only consented to hunt up the

books on condition I would not bring him forward as the finder. It was of no use to urge that it was a deprivation to us all that he should not aid us with his more thorough knowledge and deeper thought. 'He could not do so,' he said, in a quiet decisive manner; 'it was enough for him to watch and listen to Miss Fordyce, when she could forget his presence.'

She often did forget it in her eagerness. She was by nature one of the most ardent beings that I ever saw, yet with enthusiasm kept in check by the self-control inculcated as a primary duty. It would kindle in those wonderful light brown eyes, glow in the clear delicate cheek, quiver in the voice even when the words were only half adequate to the feeling. She was not what is now called gushing. Oh, no! not in the least! She was too reticent and had too much dignity for anything of the kind. Emily had always been reckoned as our romantic young lady, and teased accordingly, but her enthusiasm beside Ellen's was

'As moonlight is to sunlight, as water is to wine,'—

a mere reflection of the tone of the period, compared with a real element in the character. At least so my sister tells me, though at the time all the difference I saw was that Miss Fordyce had the most originality, and unconsciously became the leader.

The bookroom was given up to us, and there in the morning we drew, worked, read, copied and practised music, wrote out extracts, and delivered our youthful minds to one another on all imaginable topics from 'slea silk to predestination.'

Religious subjects occupied us more than might have been held likely. A spirit of reflection and revival was silently working in many a heart. Evangelicalism had stirred old-fashioned orthodoxy, and we felt its action. The *Christian Year* was Ellen's guiding star—as it was ours, nay, doubly so in proportion to the ardour of her nature. Certain poems are dearer and more eloquent to me still, because the verses recall to me the thrill of her sweet tones as she repeated them. We were all very ignorant alike of Church doctrine and history, but talking out and comparing our discoveries and impressions was as useful as it was pleasant to us.

What the *Christian Year* was in religion to us Scott was in history. We read to verify or illustrate him, and we had little raving fits over his characters, and jokes founded on them. Indeed, Ellen saw life almost through that medium; and the siege of Hill-side, dispersed by the splendid prowess of Griffith, the champion with silver helm and flashing sword, was precious to her as a renewal of the days of Ivanhoe or Damian de Lacy.

As may be believed, these quiet mornings were those when that true knight was employed in field sports or yeomanry duties, such as the state of the country called for. When he was at home, all was fun and merriment and noise—walks and rides on fine days, battledore and shuttlecock on wet ones, music, singing, paper games, giggling and making giggle, and sometimes dancing in the hall—Mr. Frank Fordyce joining with all his heart and drollery in many of these, like the boy he was.

I could play quadrilles and country dances, and now and then a reel—nobody thought of waltzes—and the three couples changed and counterchanged partners. Clarence had the sailor's foot, and did his part when needed; Emily generally fell to his share, and their silence and gravity contrasted with the mirth of the other pairs. He knew very well he was the *pis aller* of the party, and only danced when Parson Frank was not dragged out, nothing loth, by his little daughter. With Miss Fordyce, Clarence never had the chance of dancing; she was always claimed by Griff, or pounced upon by Martyn.

Miss Fordyce she always was to us in those days, and those pretty lips scrupulously 'Mistered' and 'Winslowed' us. I don't think she would have been more to us, if we had called her Nell, and had been Griff, Bill, and Ted to her, or if there

had not been all the little formalities of avoiding tête-à-têtes and the like. They were essentials of propriety then—natural, and never viewed as prudish. Nor did it detract from the sweet dignity of maidenhood that there was none of the familiarity which breeds something one would rather not mention in conjunction with a lady.

Altogether there was a sunshine around Miss Fordyce by which we all seemed illuminated, even the least favoured and least demonstrative; we were all her willing slaves, and thought her smile and thanks full reward.

One day, when Griff and Martyn were assisting at the turn out of an isolated barn at Hillside, where, Frank Fordyce declared, all the burnt-out rats and mice had taken refuge, the young ladies went out to cater for house decorations for Christmas under Clarence's escort. Nobody but the clerk ever thought of touching the church, where there were holes in all the pews to receive the holly boughs.

The girls came back, telling in eager scared voices how, while gathering butcher's broom in Farmer Hodges' home copse, a savage dog had flown out at them, but had been kept at bay by Mr. Clarence Winslow with an umbrella, while they escaped over the stile.

Clarence had not come into the drawing-room with them, and while my mother, who had a great

objection to people standing about in out-door garments, sent them up to doff their bonnets and furs, I repaired to our room, and was horrified to find him on my bed, white and faint.

‘Bitten?’ I cried in dismay.

‘Yes; but not much. Only I’m such a fool. I turned off when I began taking off my boots. No, no—don’t! Don’t call any one. It is nothing!’

He was springing up to stop me, but was forced to drop back, and I made my way to the drawing-room, where my mother happened to be alone. She was much alarmed, but a glass of wine restored Clarence; and inspection showed that the thick trowser and winter stocking had so protected him that little blood had been drawn, and there was bruise rather than bite in the calf of the leg, where the brute had caught him as he was getting over the stile as the rear-guard. It was painful, though the faintness was chiefly from tension of nerve, for he had kept behind all the way home, and no one had guessed at the hurt. My mother doctored it tenderly, and he begged that nothing should be said about it; he wanted no fuss about such a trifle. My mother agreed, with the proud feeling of not enhancing the obligations of the Fordyce family; but she absolutely kissed Clarence’s forehead as she bade him lie quiet till dinner-time.

We kept silence at table while the girls described the horrors of the monster. 'A tawny creature, with a hideous black muzzle,' said Emily. 'Like a bad dream,' said Miss Fordyce. The two fathers expressed their intention of remonstrating with the farmer, and Griff declared that it would be lucky if he did not shoot it. Miss Fordyce generously took its part, saying the poor dog was doing its duty, and Griff ejaculated, 'If I had been there!'

'It would not have dared to show its teeth, eh?' said my father, when there was a good deal of banter.

My father, however, came at night with mamma to inspect the hurt and ask details, and he ended with, 'Well done, Clarence, boy; I am gratified to see you are acquiring presence of mind, and can act like a man.'

Clarence smiled when they were gone, saying, 'That would have been an insult to any one else.'

Emily perceived that he had not come off unscathed, and was much aggrieved at being bound to silence. 'Well,' she broke out, 'if the dog goes mad, and Clarence has the hydrophobia, I suppose I may tell.'

'In that pleasing contingency,' said Clarence, smiling. 'Don't you see, Emily, it is the worst compliment you can pay me not to treat this as a matter of course?' Still, he was the happier for not having failed. Whatever strengthened his self-

respect and gave him trust in himself was a stepping-stone.

As to rivalry or competition with Griff, the idea seemingly never crossed his mind, and envy or jealousy were equally aloof from it. One subject of thankfulness runs through these recollections—namely, that nothing broke the tie of strong affection between us three brothers. Griffith might figure as the ‘vary parfite knight,’ the St. George of the piece, glittering in the halo shed round him by the bright eyes of the rescued damsel; while Clarence might drag himself along as the poor recreant to be contemned and tolerated, and he would accept the position meekly as only his desert, without a thought of bitterness. Indeed, he himself seemed to have imbibed Nurse Gooch’s original opinion, that his genuine love for sacred things was a sort of impertinence and pretension in such as he—a kind of hypocrisy even when they were the realities and helps to which he clung with all his heart. Still, this depression was only shown by reserve, and troubled no one save myself, who knew him best, guessed what was lost by his silence, and burned in spirit at seeing him merely endured as one unworthy.

In one of our varieties of Waverley discussions the crystal hardness and inexperienced intolerance of youth made Miss Fordyce declare that had she been Edith Plantagenet, she would never, never have

forgiven Sir Kenneth. 'How could she, when he had forsaken the king's banner? Unpardonable!'

Then came a sudden, awful silence, as she recollected her audience, and blushed crimson with the misery of perceiving where her random shaft had struck, nor did either of us know what to say; but to our surprise it was Clarence who first spoke to relieve the desperate embarrassment. 'Is forgiven quite the right word, when the offence was not personal? I know that such things can neither be repaired nor overlooked, and I think that is what Miss Fordyce meant.'

'Oh, Mr. Winslow,' she exclaimed, 'I am very sorry—I don't think I quite meant'—and then, as her eyes for one moment fell on his subdued face, she added, 'No, I said what I ought not. If there is sorrow'—her voice trembled—'and pardon above, no one below has any right to say unpardonable.'

Clarence bowed his head, and his lips framed, but he did not utter, 'Thank you.' Emily nervously began reading aloud the page before her, full of the jingling recurring rhymes about Sir Thomas of Kent; but I saw Ellen surreptitiously wipe away a tear, and from that time she was more kind and friendly with Clarence.

CHAPTER XX.

VENI, VIDI, VICI.

‘None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserve the fair.’—*Song.*

CHRISTMAS trees were not yet heard of beyond the Fatherland, and both the mothers held that Christmas parties were not good for little children, since Mrs. Winslow’s strong common sense had arrived at the same conclusion as Mrs. Fordyce had derived from Hannah More and Richard Lovell Edgeworth. Besides, rick-burning and mobs were far too recent for our neighbours to venture out at night.

But as we were all resolved that little Anne should have a memorable Christmas at Chantry House, we begged an innocent, though iced cake, from the cook, painted a set of characters ourselves, including all the dolls, and bespoke the presence of Frank Fordyce at a feast in the outer mullion room—Griff’s apartment, of course. The locality was chosen as allowing more opportunity for high jinks

than the bookroom, and also because the swords and pistols in trophy over the mantelpiece had a great fascination for the two sisters, and to 'drink tea with Mr. Griffith' was always known to be a great ambition of the little queen of the festival. As to the mullion chamber legends, they had nearly gone out of our heads, though Clarence did once observe, 'You remember, it will be the 26th of December;' but we did not think this worthy of consideration, especially as Anne's entertainment, at its latest, could not last beyond nine o'clock; and the ghostly performances—now entirely laid to the account of the departed stable-boy—never began before eleven.

Nor did anything interfere with our merriment. The fun of fifty years ago must be intrinsically exquisite to bear being handed down to another generation, so I will attempt no repetition, though some of those Twelfth Day characters still remain, pasted into my diary. We anticipated Twelfth Day because our guests meant to go to visit some other friends before the New Year, and we knew Anne would have no chance there of fulfilling her great ambition of drawing for king and queen. These home-made characters were really charming. Mrs. Fordyce had done several of them, and she drew beautifully. A little manipulation contrived that the exquisite Oberon and Titania should fall to

Martyn and Anne, for whom crowns and robes had been prepared, worn by her majesty with complacent dignity, but barely tolerated by him! The others took their chance. Parson Frank was Tom Thumb, and convulsed us all the evening by acting as if no bigger than that worthy, keeping us so merry that even Clarence laughed as I had never seen him laugh before.

Cock Robin and Jenny Wren—the best drawn of all—fell to Griff and Miss Fordyce. There was a suspicion of a tint of real carnation on her cheek, as, on his low, highly-delighted bow, she held up her impromptu fan of folded paper; and drollery about currant wine and hopping upon twigs went on more or less all the time, while somehow or other the beauteous glow on her cheeks went on deepening, so that I never saw her look so pretty as when thus playing at Jenny Wren's coyness, though neither she nor Griff had passed the bounds of her gracious precise discretion.

The joyous evening ended at last. With the stroke of nine, Jenny Wren bore away Queen Titania to put her to bed, for the servants were having an entertainment of their own downstairs for all the out-door retainers, etc. Oberon departed, after an interval sufficient to prove his own dignity and advanced age. Emily went down to report the success of the evening to the

elders in the drawing-room, but we lingered while Frank Fordyce was telling good stories of Oxford life, and Griff capping them with more recent ones.

We too broke up—I don't remember how; but Clarence was to help me down the stairs, and Mr. Fordyce, frowning with anxiety at the process, was offering assistance, while we had much rather he had gone out of the way; when suddenly, in the gallery round the hall giving access to the bedrooms, there dawned upon us the startled but scarcely displeased figure of Jenny Wren in her white dress, not turning aside that blushing face, while Cock Robin was clasping her hand and pressing it to his lips. The tap of my crutches warned them. She flew back within her door and shut it; Griff strode rapidly on, caught hold of her father's hand, exclaiming, 'Sir, sir, I must speak to you!' and dragged him back into the mullion room, leaving Clarence and me to convey ourselves downstairs as best we might.

'Our sister, our sweet sister!'

We were immensely excited. All the three of us were so far in love with Ellen Fordyce that her presence was an enchantment to us, and at any rate none of us ever saw the woman we could compare to her; and as we both felt ourselves disqualified in different ways from any nearer approach,

we were content to bask in the reflected rays of our brother's happiness.

Not that he had gone that length as yet, as we knew before the night was over, when he came down to us. Even with the dear maiden herself, he had only made sure that she was not averse, and that merely by her eyes and lips; and he had extracted nothing from her father but that they were both very young, a great deal too young, and had no business to think of such things yet. It must be talked over, etc. etc.

But just then, Griff told us, Frank Fordyce jumped up and turned round with the sudden exclamation, 'Ellen!' looking towards the door behind him with blank astonishment, as he found it had neither been opened nor shut. He thought his daughter had recollected something left behind, and coming in search of it, had retreated precipitately. He had seen her, he said, in the mirror opposite. Griff told him there was no mirror, and had to carry a candle across to convince him that he had only been looking at the door into the inner room, which though of shining dark oak, could hardly have made a reflection as vivid as he declared that his had been. Indeed, he ascertained that Ellen had never left her own room at all. 'It must have been thinking about the dear child,' he said. 'And after all, it was not quite like her—somehow

—she was paler, and had something over her head.’

We had no doubt who it was. Griff had not seen her, but he was certain that there had been none of the moaning nor crying, ‘In fact, she has come to give her consent,’ he said with earnest in his mocking tone.

‘Yes,’ said Clarence gravely, and with glistening eyes. ‘You are happy Griff. It is given to you to right the wrong, and quiet that poor spirit!’

‘Happy! The happiest fellow in the world,’ said Griff, ‘even without that latter clause—if only Madam and the old man will have as much sense as she has!’

The next day was a thoroughly uncomfortable one. Griff was not half so near his goal as he had hoped last night when with kindly Parson Frank.

The commotion was as if a thunderbolt had descended among the elders. What they had been thinking of, I cannot tell, not to have perceived how matters were tending; but their minds were full of the Reform Bill and the state of the country, and, besides, we were all looked on still as mere children. Indeed, Griff was scarcely one-and-twenty, and Ellen wanted a month of seventeen; and the crisis had really been a sudden impulse, as he said, ‘She looked so sweet and lovely, he could not help it.’

The first effect was a serious lecture upon maiden-

liness and propriety to poor Ellen from her mother, who was sure that she must have transgressed the bounds of discretion, or such ill-bred presumption would have been spared her, and bitterly regretted the having trusted her to take care of herself. There were sufficient grains of truth in this to make the poor girl cry herself out of all condition for appearing at breakfast or luncheon, and Emily's report of her despair made us much more angry with Mrs. Fordyce than was perhaps quite due to that good lady.

My parents were at first inclined to take the same line, and be vexed with Griff for an act of impertinence towards a guest. He had a great deal of difficulty in inducing the elders to believe him in earnest, or treat him as a man capable of knowing his own mind; and even thus they felt as if his addresses to Miss Fordyce were, under present circumstances, taking almost an unfair advantage of the other family—at which our youthful spirits felt indignant.

Yet, after all, such a match was as obvious and suitable as if it had been a family compact, and the only objection was the youth of the parties. Mrs. Fordyce would fain have believed her daughter's heart to be not yet awake, and was grieved to find childhood over, and the hero of romance become the lover; and she was anxious that full time should be

given to perceive whether her daughter's feelings were only the result of the dazzling aureole which gratitude and excited fancy had cast around the fine, handsome, winning youth. Her husband, however, who had himself married very young, and was greatly taken with Griff, besides being always tender-hearted, did not enter into her scruples; but, as we had already found out, the grand-looking and clever man of thirty-eight was, chiefly from his impulsiveness and good-nature, treated as the boy of the family. His old father, too, was greatly pleased with Griff's spirit, affection, and purpose, as well as with my father's conduct in the matter; and so, after a succession of private interviews, very tantalising to us poor outsiders, it was conceded that though an engagement for the present was preposterous, it might possibly be permitted when Ellen was eighteen, if Griff had completed his university life with full credit. He was fervently grateful to have such an object set before him, and my father was warmly thankful for the stimulus.

That last evening was very odd and constrained. We could not help looking on the lovers as new specimens over which some strange transformation had passed, though for the present it had stiffened them in public into the strictest good behaviour. They would have been awkward if it had been possible to either of them, and, save for a certain

look in their eyes, comported themselves as perfect strangers.

The three elder gentlemen held discussions in the dining-room, but we were not trusted in our playground adjoining. Mrs. Fordyce nailed Griff down to an interminable game at chess, and my mother kept the two girls playing duets, while Clarence turned over the leaves; and I read over *The Lady of the Lake*, a study which I always felt, and still feel, as an act of homage to Ellen Fordyce, though there was not much in common between her and the maid of Douglas. Indeed, it was a joke of her father's to tease her by criticising the famous passage about the tears that old Douglas shed over his duteous daughter's head—'What in the world should the man go whining and crying for? He had much better have laughed with her.'

Little did the elders know what was going on in the next room, where there was a grand courtship among the dolls; the hero being a small jointed Dutch one in Swiss costume, about an eighth part of the size of the resuscitated Celestina Mary, but the only available male character in doll-land! Anne was supposed to be completely ignorant of what passed above her head; and her mother would have been aghast had she heard the remarkable discoveries and speculations that she and Martyn communicated to one another.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OUTSIDE OF THE COURTSHIP.

‘ Or framing, as a fair excuse,
The book, the pencil, or the muse ;
Something to give, to sing, to say,
Some modern tale, some ancient lay.’

SCOTT.

It seems to me on looking back that I have hardly done justice to Mrs. Fordyce, and certainly we—as Griffith’s eager partisans—often regarded her in the light of an enemy and opponent ; but after this lapse of time, I can see that she was no more than a prudent mother, unwilling to see her fair young daughter suddenly launched into womanhood, and involved in an attachment to a young and untried man.

The part of a drag is an invidious one ; and this must have been her part through most of her life. The Fordyces, father and son, were of good family, gentlemen to their very backbones, and thoroughly good, religious men ; but she came of a more aristocratic strain, had been in London society, and brought

with her a high-bred air which, implanted on the Fordyce good looks, made her daughter especially fascinating. But that air did not recommend Mrs. Fordyce to all her neighbours, any more than did those stronger, stricter, more thorough-going notions of religious obligation which had led her husband to make the very real and painful sacrifice of his sporting tastes, and attend to the parish in a manner only too rare in those days. She was a very well-informed and highly accomplished woman, and had made her daughter the same, keeping her children up in a somewhat exclusive style, away from all gossip or undesirable intimacies, as recommended by Miss Edgeworth and other more religious authorities, and which gave great offence in houses where there were girls of the same age. No one, however, could look at Ellen, and doubt of the success of the system, or of the young girl's entire content and perfect affection for her mother, though her father was her beloved playfellow—yet always with respect. She never took liberties with him, nor called him Pap or any other ridiculous name inconsistent with the fifth Commandment, though she certainly was more entirely at ease with him than ever we had been with our elderly father. When once Mrs. Fordyce found on what terms we were to be, she accepted them frankly and fully. Already Emily had been the first girl, not a relation, whose friendship she had

fostered with Ellen; and she had also become thoroughly affectionate and at home with my mother, who suited her perfectly on the conscientious, and likewise on the prudent and sensible, side of her nature.

To me she was always kindness itself, so kind that I never felt, as I did on so many occasions, that she was very pitiful and attentive to the deformed youth; but that she really enjoyed my companionship, and I could help her in her pursuits. I have a whole packet of charming notes of hers about books, botany, drawings, little bits of antiquarianism, written with an arch grace and finish of expression peculiarly her own, and in a very pointed hand, yet too definite to be illegible. I owe her more than I can say for the windows of wholesome hope and ambition she opened to me, giving a fresh motive and zest even to such a life as mine. I can hardly tell which was the most delightful companion, she or her husband. In spite of ill health, she knew every plant, and every bit of fair scenery in the neighbourhood, and had fresh, amusing criticisms to utter on each new book; while he, not neglecting the books, was equally well acquainted with all beasts and birds, and shed his kindly light over everything he approached. He was never melancholy about anything but politics, and even there it was an immense consolation to him to have the

owner of Chantry House staunch on the same side, instead of in chronic opposition.

The family party moved to a tall house at Bath, but there still was close intercourse, for the younger clergyman rode over every week for the Sunday duty, and almost always dined and slept at Chantry House. He acted as bearer of long letters, which, in spite of a reticulation of crossings, were too expensive by post for young ladies' pocket-money, often exceeding the regular quarto sheet. It was a favourite joke to ask Emily what Ellen reported about Bath fashions, and to see her look of scorn. For they were a curious mixture, those girlish letters, of village interests, discussion of books, and thoughts beyond their age; Tommy Toogood and Prometheus; or Du Guesclin in the closest juxtaposition with reports of progress in Abercrombie on the *Intellectual Powers*. It was the desire of Ellen to prove herself not unsettled but improved by love, and to become worthy of her ideal Griffith, never guessing that he would have been equally content with her if she had been as frivolous as the idlest girl who lingered amid the waning glories of Bath.

We all made them a visit there when Martyn was taken to a preparatory school in the place. Mrs. Fordyce took me out for drives on the beautiful hills; and Emily and I had a very delightful time, undisturbed by the engrossing claims of love-making.

Very good, too, were our friends, after our departure, in letting Martyn spend Sundays and holidays with them, play with Anne as before, say his Catechism with her to Mrs. Fordyce, and share her little Sunday lessons, which had, he has since told, a force and attractiveness he had never known before, and really did much, young as he was, in preparing the way towards the fulfilment of my father's design for him.

When the Rectory was ready, and the family returned, it was high summer, and there were constant meetings between the households. No doubt there were the usual amount of trivial disappointments and annoyances, but the whole season seems to me to have been bathed in sunlight. The Reform Bill agitations and the London mobs of which Clarence wrote to us were like waves surging beyond an isle of peace. Clarence had some unpleasant walks from the office. Once or twice the shutters had to be put up at Frith and Castleford's to prevent the windows from being broken ; and once Clarence actually saw our nation's hero, 'the Duke,' riding quietly and slowly through a yelling, furious mob, who seemed withheld from falling on him by the perfect impassiveness of the eagle face and spare figure. Moreover a pretty little boy, on his pony, suddenly pushed forward and rode by the Duke's side, as if proud and resolute to share his peril.

‘If Griffith had been there!’ said Ellen and Emily, though they did not exactly know what they expected him to have done.

The chief storms that drifted across our sky were caused by Mrs. Fordyce’s resolution that Griffith should enjoy none of the privileges of an accepted suitor before the engagement was an actual fact. Ellen was obedient and conscientious; and would neither transgress nor endure to have her mother railed at by Griff’s hasty tongue, and this affronted him, and led to little breezes.

When people overstay their usual time, tempers are apt to get rather difficult. Griffith had kept all his terms at Oxford, and was not to return thither after the long vacation, but was to read with a tutor before taking his degree. Moreover bills began to come from Oxford, not very serious, but vexing my father and raising annoyances and frets, for Griff resented their being complained of, and thought himself ill-used, going off to see his own friends whenever he was put out.

One morning at breakfast, late in October, he announced that Lady Peacock was in lodgings at Clifton, and asked my mother to call on her. But mamma said it was too far for the horse—she visited no one at that distance, and had never thought much of Selina Clarkson before or after her marriage.

‘But now that she is a widow, it would be such a kindness,’ pleaded Griff.

‘Depend upon it, a gay young widow needs no kindness from me, and had better not have it from you,’ said my mother, getting up from behind her urn and walking off, followed by my father.

Griff drummed on the table. ‘I wonder what good ladies of a certain age do with their charity,’ he said.

And while we were still crying out at him, Ellen Fordyce and her father appeared, like mirth bidding good-morrow, at the window. All was well for the time, but Griff wanted Ellen to set out alone with him, and take their leisurely way through the wood-path, and she insisted on waiting for her father, who had got into an endless discussion with mine on the Reform Bill, thrown out in the last Session. Griff tried to wile her on with him, but, though she consented to wander about the lawn before the windows with him, she always resolutely turned at the great beech tree. Emily and I watched them from the window, at first amused, then vexed, as we could see, by his gestures, that he was getting out of temper, and her straw bonnet drooped at one moment, and was raised the next in eager remonstrance or defence. At last he flung angrily away from her, and went off to the stables, leaving her leaning against the gate in tears. Emily, in an access of indignant

sympathy, rushed out to her, and they vanished together into the summer-house, until her father called her, and they went home together.

Emily told me that Ellen had struggled hard to keep herself from crying enough to show traces of tears which her father could observe, and that she had excused Griff with all her might on the plea of her own 'tiresomeness.'

We were all the more angry with him for his selfishness and want of consideration, for Ellen, in her torrent of grief, had even disclosed that he had said she did not care for him—no one really in love ever scrupled about a mother's nonsense, etc. etc.

We were resolved, like two sages, to give him a piece of our minds, and convince him that such dutifulness was the pledge of future happiness, and that it was absolute cruelty to the rare creature he had won, to try to draw her in a direction contrary to her conscience.

However, we saw him no more that day; and only learnt that he had left a message at the stables that dinner was not to be kept waiting for him. Such a message from Clarence would have caused a great commotion; but it was quite natural and a matter of course from him in the eyes of the elders, who knew nothing of his parting with Ellen. However, there was annoyance enough, when bedtime came,

family prayers were over, and still there was no sign of him. My father sat up till one o'clock, to let him in, then gave it up, and I heard his step heavily mounting the stairs.

CHAPTER XXII.

BRISTOL DIAMONDS.

Stafford. And you that are the King's friends, follow me.

Cade. And you that love the Commons, follow me ;
We will not leave one lord, one gentleman,
Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon.'

Act 1. *Henry VI.*

THE next day was Sunday, and no Griff appeared in the morning. Vexation, perhaps, prevented us from attending as much as we otherwise might have done to Mr. Henderson when he told us that there were rumours of a serious disturbance at Bristol; until Emily recollected that Griff had been talking for some days past of riding over to see his friend in the cavalry regiment there stationed, and we all agreed that it was most likely that he was there; and our wrath began to soften in the belief that he might have been detained to give his aid in the cause of order, though his single arm could not be expected to effect as much as at Hillside.

Long after dark we heard a horse's feet, and in another minute Griff, singed, splashed, and battered

had hurried into the room—‘It has begun!’ he said. ‘The revolution! I have brought her—Lady Peacock. She was at Clifton, dreadfully alarmed. She is almost at the door now, in her carriage. I’ll just take the pony, and ride over to tell Eastwood in case he will call out the Yeomanry.’

The wheels were to be heard, and everybody hastened out to receive Lady Peacock, who was there with her maid, full of gratitude. I heard her broken sentences as she came across the hall, about dreadful scenes—frightful mob—she knew not what would have become of her but for Griffith—the place was in flames when they left it—the military would not act—Griffith had assured her that Mr. and Mrs. Winslow would be so kind—as long as any place was a refuge——

We really did believe we were at the outbreak of a revolution or civil war, and, all little frets forgotten, listened appalled to the tidings; how the appearance of Sir Charles Wetherall, the Recorder of Bristol, a strong opponent to the Reform Bill, seemed to have inspired the mob with fury. Griff and his friend the dragoon, while walking in Broad Street, were astonished by a violent rush of riotous men and boys, hooting and throwing stones as the Recorder’s carriage tried to make its way to the Guildhall. In the midst a piteous voice exclaimed—‘Oh, Griffith! Mr. Griffith Winslow! Is it you?’

and Lady Peacock was seen retreating upon the stone steps of a house either empty, or where the inhabitants were too much alarmed to open the doors. She was terribly frightened, and the two gentlemen stood in front of her till the tumultuary procession had passed by. She was staying in lodgings at Clifton, and had driven in to Bristol to shop, when she thus found herself entangled in the mob. They then escorted her to the place where she was to meet her carriage, and found it for her with some difficulty. Then, while the officer returned to his quarters, Griff accompanied her far enough on the way to Clifton to see that everything was quiet before her, and then returned to seek out his friend. The court at the Guildhall had had to be adjourned, but the rioters were hunting Sir Charles to the Mansion-House. Griff was met by one of the Town Council, a tradesman with whom we dealt, who, having perhaps heard of his prowess at Hillside, entreated him to remain, offering him a bed, and saying that all friends of order were needed in such a crisis as this. Griff wrote a note to let us know what had become of him, but everything was disorganised, and we did not get it till two days afterwards.

In the evening the mob became more violent, and in the midst of dinner a summons came for Griff's host to attend the Mayor in endeavouring to disperse it. Getting into the Mansion-House by

private back ways, they were able to join the Mayor when he came out, amid a shower of brickbats, sticks, and stones, and read the Riot Act three times over, after warning them of the consequences of persisting in their defiance.

‘But they were far past caring for that,’ said Griff. ‘An iron rail from the square was thrown in the midst of it, and if I had not caught it there would have been an end of his Worship.’

The constables, with such help as Griff and a few others could give them, defended the front of the Mansion-House, while the Recorder, for whom they savagely roared, made his escape by the roof to another house. A barricade was made with beds, tables, and chairs, behind which the defenders sheltered themselves, while volleys of stones smashed in the windows, and straw was thrown after them. But at last the tramp of horses’ feet was heard, and the Dragoons came up.

‘We thought all over then,’ said Griff; ‘but Colonel Brereton would not have a blow struck, far less a shot fired! He would have it that it was a good-humoured mob! I heard him! When one of his own men was brought up badly hurt with a brickbat, I heard Ludlow, the Town-Clerk, ask him what he thought of their good humour, and he had nothing to say but that it was an accident! And the rogues knew it! He took care they should; he

walked about among them and shook hands with them !'

Griff waited at the Mansion-House all night, and helped to board up the smashed windows ; but at daylight Colonel Brereton came and insisted on withdrawing the piquet on guard—not, however, sending a relief for them, on the plea that they only collected a crowd. The instant they were withdrawn, down came the mob in fresh force, so desperate that all the defences were torn down, and they swarmed in so that there was nothing for it but to escape over the roofs.

Griffith was sent to rouse the inhabitants of College Green and St. Augustine's Back to come in the King's name to assist the Magistrates, and he had many good stories of the various responses he met with. But the rioters, inflamed by the wine they had found in sacking the Mansion-House, and encouraged by the passiveness of the troops, had become entirely masters of the situation. And Colonel Brereton seems to have imagined that the presence of the soldiers acted as an irritation ; for in this crisis he actually sent them out of the city to Keynsham, then came and informed the mob, who cheered him, as well they might.

In the night the Recorder had left the city, and notices were posted to that effect ; also that the Riot Act had been read, and any further dis-

turbance would be capital felony. This escape of their victim only had the effect of directing the rage of the populace against Bishop Grey, who had likewise opposed the Reform Bill.

Messages had been sent to advise the Bishop, who was to preach that day at the Cathedral, to stay away and sanction the omission of the service; but his answer to one of his clergy was—‘These are times in which it is necessary not to shrink from danger! Our duty is to be at our post.’ And he also said, ‘Where can I die better than in my own Cathedral?’

Since the bells were ringing, and it was understood that the Bishop was actually going to dare the peril, Griff and others of the defenders decided that it was better to attend the service and fill up the nave so as to hinder outrage. He said it was a most strange and wonderful service. Chants and Psalms and Lessons and prayers going on their course as usual, but every now and then in the pauses of the organ, a howl or yell of the voice of the multitude would break on the ear through the thick walls. Griff listened and hoped for a volley of musketry. He was not tender-hearted! But none came, and by the time the service was over, the mob had been greatly reinforced and had broken into the prisons, set them on fire, and released the prisoners. They were mustering on College Green

for an attack on the palace. Griff aided in guarding the entrance to the cloisters till the Bishop and his family had had time to drive away to Almondsbury, four miles off, and then the rush became so strong that they had to give way. There was another great struggle at the door of the palace, but it was forced open with a crowbar, while shouts rang out 'No King and no Bishops!' A fire was made in the dining-room with chairs and tables, and live coals were put into the beds, while the plunder went on.

Griff meantime had made his way to the party headed by the magistrates, and accompanied by the dragoons, and the mob began to flee; but Colonel Brereton had given strict orders that the soldiers should not fire, and the plunderers rallied, made a fire in the Chapter House, and burnt the whole of the library, shouting with the maddest triumph.

They next attacked the Cathedral, intending to burn that likewise, but two brave gentlemen, Mr. Ralph and Mr. Linne, succeeded in saving this last outrage, at the head of the better affected.

Griff had fought hard. He was all over bruises which he really had never felt at the time, scarcely even now, though one side of his face was turning purple, and his clothes were singed. In a sort of council held at the repulse of the attack on the Cathedral, it had been decided that the best thing

he could do would be to give notice to Sir George Eastwood, in order that the Yeomanry might be called out, since the troops were so strangely prevented from acting. As he rode through Clifton, he had halted at Lady Peacock's, and found her in extreme alarm. Indeed, no one could guess what the temper of the mob might be the next day, or whether they might not fall upon private houses. The Mansion-House, the prisons, the palace were all burning and were an astounding sight, which terrified her exceedingly, and she was sending out right and left to endeavour to get horses to take her away. In common humanity, and for old acquaintance sake, it was impossible not to help her, and Griff had delayed, to offer any amount of reward in her name for posthorses, which he had at last secured. Her own man-servant, whom she had sent in quest of some, had never returned, and she had to set off without him, Griff acting as out-rider; but after the first there was no more difficulty about horses, and she had been able to change them at the next stage.

We all thought the days of civil war were really begun, as the heads of this account were hastily gathered; but there was not much said, only Mr. Frank Fordyce laid his hand on Griff's shoulder and said, 'Well done, my boy; but you have had enough for to-day. If you'll lend me a

horse, Winslow, I'll ride over to Eastwood. That's work for the clergy in these times, eh? Griffith should rest. He may be wanted to-morrow. Only is there any one to take a note home for me, to say where I'm gone;' and then he added with that sweet smile of his, 'Some one will be more the true knight than ever, eh, you Griffith, you——'

Griffith coloured a little, and Lady Peacock's eyes looked interrogative. When the horse was announced, Griff followed Mr. Fordyce into the hall, and came back announcing that, unless summoned elsewhere, he should go to breakfast at Hill-side, and so hear what was decided on. He longed to be back at the scene of action, but was so tired out that he could not dispense with another night's rest; though he took all precautions for being called up, in case of need.

However, nothing came, and he rode to the Rectory in Yeomanry equipment. Nor could any one doubt that in the ecstasy of meeting such a hero, all the little misunderstanding and grief of the night before was forgotten? Ellen looked as if she trod on air, when she came down with her father to report that Griffith had gone, according to the orders sent, to join the rest of the Yeomanry, who were to advance upon Bristol. They had seen, and tried to turn back, some of the villagers

who were starting with bludgeons to share in the spoil, and who looked sullen, as if they were determined not to miss their share.

I do not think we were very much alarmed for Griff's safety or for our own, not even the ladies. My mother had the lion-heart of her naval ancestors, and Ellen was in a state of exaltation. Would that I could put her before other eyes, as she stood with hands clasped and glowing cheek.

‘Oh!—think!—think of having one among us who is as real and true knight as ever watched his armour—

“ For king, for church, for lady fight !”

It has all come gloriously true !’

‘Should not you like to bind on his spurs ?’ I asked somewhat mischievously ; but she was serious as she said, ‘I am sure he has won them.’ All the rest of the Fordyces came down afterwards, too anxious to stay at home. Our elders felt the matter more gravely, thinking of what civil war might mean to us all, and what an awful thing it was for Englishmen to be enrolled against each other. Nottingham Castle had just been burnt, and things looked only too like revolution, especially considering the inaction of the dragoons. After Griff had left Bristol, there had been some terrible scenes at the Custom House, where the ringleaders

—unhappy men!—were caught in a trap of their own and perished miserably.

However, by the morning, the order sent from Lord Hill, the arrival of Major Beckwith from Gloucester, and the proceedings of the good-humoured mob had put an end to poor Brereton's hesitations; a determined front had been shown; the mob had been fairly broken up; troops from all quarters poured into the city, and by dinner-time Griff came back with the news that all was quiet and there was nothing more to fear. Ellen and Emily both flew out to meet him at the first sound of the horse's feet, and they all came into the drawing-room together—each young lady having hold of one of his hands—and Ellen's face in such a glow, that I rather suspect that he had snatched a reward which certainly would not have been granted save in such a moment of uplifted feeling, and when she was thankful to her hero for forgetting how angry he had been with her two days before.

Minor matters were forgotten in the details of his tidings, as he stood before the fire, shining in his silver lace, and relating the tragedy and the comedy of the scene.

It was curious, as the evening passed on, to see how Ellen and Lady Peacock regarded each other, now that the tension of suspense was over. To

Ellen, the guest was primarily a distressed and widowed dame, delivered by Griff, to whom she, as his lady love, was bound to be gracious and kind; nor had they seen much of one another, the elder ladies sitting in the drawing-room, and we in our own regions; but we were all together at dinner and afterwards, and Lady Peacock, who had been in a very limp, nervous, and terrified state all day, began to be the Selina Clarkson we remembered, and 'more too.' She was still in mourning, but she came down to dinner in gray satin sheen, and with her hair in a most astonishing erection of bows and bands, on the very crown of her head, raising her height at least four inches. Emily assures me that it was the mode in use, and that she and Ellen wore their hair in the same style, appealing to portraits to prove it. I can only say that they never astonished my weak mind in the like manner; and that their heads, however dressed, only appeared to me a portion of the general woman, and part of the universal fitness of things. Ellen was likewise amazed, most likely not at the hair, but at the transformation of the disconsolate, frightened widow, into the handsome, fashionable, stylish lady, talking over London acquaintance and London news with my father and Griff whenever they left the endless subject of the Bristol adventures.

The widow had gained a good deal in beauty since her early girlhood, having regular features, eyes of an uncommon deep blue, very black brows, eye-lashes, and hair, and a form of the kind that is better after early youth is over. 'A fine figure of a woman,' Parson Frank pronounced her, and his wife, with the fine edge of her lips replied, 'exactly what she is!'

She looked upon us younger ones as mere children still—indeed she never looked at me at all if she could help it—but she mortally offended Emily by penning her up in a corner, and asking if Griff were engaged to that sentimental little girl.

Emily coloured like a turkey cock between wrath and embarrassment, and hotly protested against the word sentimental.

'Ah yes, I see!' she said in a patronising tone, 'she is your bosom friend, eh? That's the way those things always begin. You need not answer: I see it all. And no doubt it is a capital thing for him; properties joining and all. And she will get a little air and style when he takes her to London.'

It was a tremendous offence even to hint that Ellen's style was capable of improvement; perhaps an unprejudiced eye would have said that the difference was between high-bred simplicity and the air of fashion and society.

In our eyes Lady Peacock was the companion

of the elders, and as such was appreciated by the gentlemen; but neither of the two mothers was equally delighted with her, nor was mine at all sorry when, on Tuesday, the boxes were packed, posthorses sent for, and my Lady departed, with great expressions of thankfulness to us all.

‘A tulip to a jessamine,’ muttered Griff as she drove off, and he looked up at his Ellen’s sweet refined face.

The unfortunate Colonel Brereton put an end to himself when the court-martial was half over. How Clarence was shocked and how ardent was his pity! But Griffith received the thanks of the Corporation of Bristol for his gallant conduct, when the special assize was held in January. Mrs. Fordyce was almost as proud of him as we were, and there was much less attempt at restraining the terms on which he stood with Ellen—though still the formal engagement was not permitted.

CHAPTER XXIII.

QUICKSANDS.

‘ Whither shall I go ?

Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?’

TENNYSON.

It was in the May of the ensuing year, 1832, that Clarence was sent down to Bristol for a few weeks to take the place of one of the clerks in the office where the cargoes of the incoming vessels of the firm were received and overhauled.

This was a good-natured arrangement of Mr. Castleford’s in order to give him change of work and a sight of home, where, by the help of the coach, he could spend his Sundays. That first spring day on his way down was a great delight and even surprise to him, who had never seen our profusion of primroses, cowslips, and bluebells, nor our splendid blossom of trees—apple, lilac, laburnum—all vying in beauty with one another. Emily conducted him about in great delight, taking him over to Hillside to see Mrs. Fordyce’s American garden, blazing with azaleas, and glowing with rhododendrons. He came

back with a great bouquet given to him by Ellen, who had been unusually friendly with him, and he was more animated and full of life than for years before.

Next time he came he looked less happy. There was plenty of room in our house, but he used, by preference, the little chamber within mine, and there at night he asked me to lend him a few pounds, since Griffith had written one of his off-hand letters asking him to discharge a little bill or two at Bristol, giving the addresses, but not sending the accounts. This was no wonder, since any enclosure doubled the already heavy postage. One of these bills was for some sporting equipments from the gunsmith's; another, much heavier, from a tavern for breakfasts, or rather luncheons, to parties of gentlemen, mostly bearing date in the summer and autumn of 1830, before the friendship with the Fordyces had begun. On Clarence's defraying the first and applying for the second, two more had come in, one from a jeweller for a pair of drop-earrings, the other from a nurseryman for a bouquet of exotics. Doubting of these two last, Clarence had written to Griff, but had not yet received an answer. The whole amount was so much beyond what he had been led to expect that he had not brought enough money to meet it, and wanted an advance from me, promising repayment, to which latter point I could not assent, as both of us knew,

but did not say, we should never see the sum again, and to me it only meant stinting in new books and curiosities. We were anxious to get the matter settled at once, as Griffith spoke of being dunned; and it might be serious, if the tradesmen applied to my father when he was still groaning over revelations of college expenses.

On the ensuing Saturday, Clarence showed me Griff's answer—'I had forgotten these items. The earrings were a wedding present to the pretty little barmaid, who had been very civil. The bouquet was for Lady Peacock; I felt bound to do something to atone for mamma's severe virtue. It is all right, you best of brothers.'

It was consolatory that all the dates were prior to the Hillside fire, except that of the bouquet. As to the earrings, we all knew that Griff could not see a pretty girl without talking nonsense to her. Anyway, if they were a wedding present, there was an end of it; and we were only glad to prevent any hint of them from reaching the ears of the authorities.

Clarence had another trouble to confide to me. He had strong reason to believe that Tooke, the managing clerk at Bristol, was carrying on a course of speculation, and feathering his nest at the expense of the firm. What a grand discovery, thought I, for such a youth to have made. The firm would be

infinitely obliged to him, and his fortune would be secured. He shook his head, and said that was all my ignorance; the man, Tooke, was greatly trusted, especially by Mr. Frith the senior partner, and was so clever and experienced that it would be almost impossible to establish anything against him. Indeed he had browbeaten Clarence, and convinced him at the moment that his suspicions and perplexities were only due to the ignorance of a foolish, scrupulous youth, who did not understand the customs and perquisites of an agency. It was only when Clarence was alone, and reflected on the matter by the light of experience gained on a similar expedition to Liverpool, that he had perceived that Mr. Tooke had been throwing dust in his eyes.

‘I shall only get into a scrape myself,’ said Clarence despondently. ‘I have felt it coming ever since I have been at Bristol;’ and he pushed his hair back with a weary hopeless gesture.

‘But you don’t mean to let it alone?’ I cried indignantly.

He hesitated in a manner that painfully recalled his failing, and said at last, ‘I don’t know; I suppose I ought not.’

‘Suppose?’ I cried.

‘It is not so easy as you think,’ he answered, ‘especially for one who has forfeited the right to be believed. I must wait till I have an opportunity

of speaking to Mr. Castleford, and then I can hardly do more than privately give him a hint to be watchful. You don't know how things are in such houses as ours. One may only ruin oneself without doing any good.'

'You cannot write to him?'

'Certainly not. He has taken his family to Mrs. Castleford's home in the north of Ireland for a month or six weeks. I don't know the address, and I cannot run the risk of the letter being opened at the office.'

'Can't you speak to my father?'

'Impossible! it would be a betrayal. He would do things for which I should never be forgiven. And, after all, remember, it is no business of mine. I know of agents at the docks who do such things as a matter of course. It is only that I happen to know that Harris at Liverpool does not. Very possibly old Frith knows all about it. I should only get scored down as a meddlesome prig, worse hypocrite than they think me already.'

He said a good deal more to this effect, and I remember exclaiming, 'Oh, Clarence, the old story!' and then being frightened at the whiteness that came over his face.

Little did I know the suffering to which those words of mine condemned him. For not only had he to make up his mind to resistance, which to his

nature was infinitely worse than it was to Griffith to face a raging mob, but he knew very well that it would almost inevitably produce his own ruin, and renew the disgrace out of which he was beginning to emerge. I did not—even while I prayed that he might do the right—guess at his own agony of supplication, carried on incessantly, day and night, sleeping and waking, that the Holy Spirit of might should brace his will and govern his tongue, and make him say the right thing at the right time, be the consequences what they might. No one, not constituted as he was, can guess at the anguish he endured. I knew no more. Clarence did not come home the next Saturday, to my mother's great vexation; but on Tuesday a small parcel was given to me, brought from our point of contact with the Bristol coach. It contained some pencils I had asked him to get, and a note marked *private*. Here it is—

‘DEAR EDWARD—I am summoned to town. Tooke has no doubt forestalled me. We have had some curious interviews, in which he first, as I told you, persuaded me out of my senses that it was all right, and then, finding me still dissatisfied, tried in a delicate fashion to apprise me that I had a claim to a share of the plunder. When I refused to appropriate anything without sanction from headquarters, he threatened me with the consequences

of presumptuous interference. It came to bullying at last. I hardly know what I answered, but I don't think I gave in. Now, a sharp letter from old Frith recalls me. Say nothing at home; and whatever you do, do not betray Griff. He has more to lose than I. Help me in the true way, as you know how.—Ever yours, W. C. W.

I need not dwell on the misery of those days. It was well that my father had ruled that our letters should not be family property. Here were all the others discussing a proposed tour in the north of Devon, to be taken conjointly with the Fordyces, as soon as Griff should come home. My mother said it would do me good; she saw I was flagging, but she little guessed at the continual torment of anxiety, and my wonder at the warning about Griff.

At the end of the week came another letter.

‘You need not speak yet. Papa and mamma will know soon enough. I brought down £150 in specie, to be paid over to Tooke. He avers that only £130 was received. What is my word worth against his? I am told that if I am not prosecuted it will only be out of respect to my father. I am not dismissed yet, but shall get notice as soon as letters come from Ireland. I have written, but it is not in the nature of things that Mr. Castleford

should not accept such proofs as have been sent him. I have no hope, and shall be glad when it is over. The part of black sheep is not a pleasant one. Say not a word, and do not let my father come up. He could do no good, and to see him believing it all would be the last drop in the bucket.

N.B.—In this pass, nothing would be saved by bringing Griff into it, so be silent on your life. Innocence does not seem to be much comfort at present. Maybe it will come in time. I know you will not drop me, dear Ted, wherever I may be.'

Need I tell the distress of those days of suspense and silence, when my only solace was in being left alone, and in writing letters to Clarence which were mostly torn up again.

My horror was lest he should be driven to go off to the sea, which he loved so well, knowing, as nobody else did, the longing that sometimes seized him for it, a hereditary craving that curiously conflicted with the rest of his disposition; and, indeed, his lack was more of moral than of physical courage. It haunted me constantly that his entreaty that my father should not come to London was a bad sign, and that he would never face such another return home. And was I justified in keeping all this to myself, when my father's presence might save him from the flight that would indeed be the

surrender of his character, and to the life of a common sailor? Never have I known such leaden days as these, yet the misery was not a tithe of what Clarence was undergoing.

I was right in my forebodings. Prosecution and a second return home in shame and disgrace were alike hideous to Clarence, and the present was almost equally terrible, for nobody at the office had any doubt of his guilt, and the young men who had sneered at his strictness and religious habits regarded him as an unmasked hypocrite, only waiting on sufferance till his greatly deceived patron should write to decide on the steps to be taken with him, while he knew he was thought to be brazening it out in hopes of again deceiving Mr. Castleford.

The sea began to exert its power over him, and he thought with longing of its freedom, as if the sails of the vessels were the wings of a dove to flee away and be at rest. He had no illusions as to the roughness of the life and companionship; but in his present mood, the frank rudeness and profanity of the sailors seemed preferable to his cramped life, and the scowls of his fellows; and he knew himself to have seamanship enough to rise quickly, even if he could not secure a mate's berth at first.

Mr. Castleford could not be heard from till the

end of the week. Friday, Saturday came and not a word. That was the climax ! When the consignment of cash, hitherto carried by Clarence to the Bank of England, was committed to another clerk, the very office boy sniggered, and the manager demonstratively waited to see him depart.

Unable to bear it any longer, he walked towards Wapping, bought a Southwester, examined the lists of shipping, and entered into conversation with one or two sailors about the vessels making up their crews ; intending to go down after dark, to meet the skipper of a craft bound for Lisbon, who, he heard, was so much in want of a mate as perhaps to overlook the lack of testimonials, and at any rate take him on board on Sunday.

Going home to pick up a few necessaries, a book lent to him by Miss Newton came in his way, and he felt drawn to carry it home, and see her face for the last time.

All unconscious of his trouble and of his intentions, the good lady told him of her strong desire to hear a celebrated preacher at a neighbouring church on the Sunday evening, but said that in her partial blindness and weakness, she was afraid to venture, unless he would have the extreme goodness, as she said, to take care of her. He saw that she wished it so much that he had not the heart to refuse, and he recollected likewise that very early

on Monday morning would answer his purpose equally well.

It was the 7th of June. The Psalm was the 37th—the supreme lesson of patience. ‘Hold thee still in the Lord; and abide patiently on Him; and He shall bring it to pass. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealing as the noonday.’

The awful sense of desolation seemed to pass away under those words, with that gentle woman beside him. And the sermon was on ‘Oh tarry thou the Lord’s leisure; be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.’

Clarence remembered nothing but the text. But it was borne in upon him that his purpose of flight was ‘the old story,’—cowardice and virtual distrust of the Lord, as well as absolute cruelty to us who loved him.

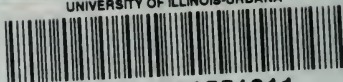
When he had deposited Miss Newton at her own door, he whispered thanks, and an entreaty for her prayers.

And then he went home, and fought the battle of his life, with his own horrible dread of Mr. Castleford’s disappointment; of possible prosecution; of the shame at home; the misery of a life a second time blighted. He fought it out on his knees, many a time persuading himself that flight

would not be a sin, then returning to the sense that it was a temptation of his worse self to be overcome. And by morning he knew that it would be a surrender of himself to his lower nature, and the evil spirit behind it; while, by facing the worst that could befall him, he would be falling into the hand of the Lord.

END OF VOL. I.

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